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Security Council

Seventy-first year

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7686th meeting
Wednesday, 4 May 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Aboulatta	(Egypt)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	France	Mrs. Audouard
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

Briefings by Chairs of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Briefings by Chairs of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Gerard van Bohemen, Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): Since my previous briefing to the Security Council in December (see S/PV.7587), the Security Council has adopted resolution 2253 (2015), which refocused the work of the Committee established pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), or Da'esh, and its affiliates, and on limiting the financing of those groups. Since then, the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team established pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities, tasked with keeping us apprised of the threat posed by ISIL, Al-Qaida and affiliates, has provided the Committee with several updates.

In February, the Monitoring Team briefed the 1267 Committee and the Counter-Terrorism Committee on the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters, and more recently also briefed the 1267 Committee on the expansion of ISIL beyond Iraq and Syria. I will share some of its findings today.

The threat posed by ISIL has shifted somewhat since December. ISIL's core in Iraq and Syria is under pressure. It has lost control of some territory, and the destruction of significant parts of its oil infrastructure has led to a drop in internal revenue generation. As a response to that, however, we have seen ISIL looking to increase revenue from other streams, including internal taxation, smuggling antiquities and, potentially, kidnapping for ransom.

Nor is ISIL short of arms and fighters. Although recent reports indicate that the flow of recruits to it is slowing, estimates suggest that to date upwards of 30,000 foreign terrorist fighters have travelled to Iraq and Syria. As reported by the Monitoring Team, in response to the pressure on its core, ISIL's centre of gravity is shifting. The threat is expanding geographically as ISIL affiliates spring up around the world. And as pressure on ISIL's core increases, foreign terrorist fighters are also seeking to return home. Those developments pose both a challenge and an opportunity for improving the impact and effectiveness of the 1267 sanctions regime. While some foreign terrorist fighters return from conflict zones disillusioned by what they have experienced, others come back radicalized, battle-hardened and well networked. Such fighters pose a real threat to the wider international community. Member States from all regions of the world are affected. These fighters can exploit networks, including with local Al-Qaida affiliates, to conduct terror attacks. Their capacity to initiate complex attacks at great speed is already becoming a reality.

It is also difficult to detect the travel of foreign terrorist fighters. Many now use broken travel routes to and from conflict zones, making it much harder to track them. Whereas previously they may have travelled directly from their state of residence to a neighbouring country of the conflict zone, they are now taking multiple, indirect routes, often using more than one passport. If we are to get on top of this threat, it is essential that Member States implement the steps called for in resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014) and share information to enable better detection and disruption of travel by foreign terrorist fighters.

ISIL affiliates in Libya, Afghanistan and Yemen are steadily gaining a foothold and becoming increasingly important to the survival of ISIL. As pressure increases on the ISIL core in Iraq and Syria, it is expected that ISIL will look to move funds to those affiliates, including through the use of informal money transfer arrangements. It is crucial, therefore, that Member States, particularly those neighbouring Iraq and Syria, be vigilant in implementing the 1267 regime.

This movement of funds and fighters outside of ISIL-controlled territory provides an opportunity for

Member States to detect and prevent the wider spread of ISIL. This is where the sanctions measures can have the most impact. When effectively targeted and implemented, the sanctions can place pressure on ISIL and its affiliates, preventing the dispersal of funds and disrupting further attacks on civilian populations. The measures for the freezing of assets are one area where the sanctions can really bite. But for this to happen, the Committee needs targeted designations of individuals involved in the generation and movement of assets. Member States with information about these individuals and entities have a role to play by putting forward new listing requests, as encouraged in resolution 2253 (2015).

It is also crucial that Member States engage with and provide updated information to the Monitoring Team and 1267 Committee on the nature of the threat, listed individuals and entities, and the status of their implementation and enforcement of sanctions measures. This information is fundamental to the operation of the regime. The Council and international community can target their response effectively only if they have up-to-date information. I encourage those Member States that have not done so to submit their implementation reports called for in paragraph 36 of resolution 2253 (2015).

The Committee is also playing its part in assisting Member States' engagement with the sanctions regime. The Committee already held one open briefing for interested Member States last month, and plans to hold another two such open briefings before the end of this year. A one-page outline is available in the Chamber today, providing an overview of the key upcoming dates and deadlines for 1267 Committee engagement. We are also in the process of updating the Committee's guidelines with the aim of improving the regime's efficiency and effectiveness. These guidelines were last updated in 2013. It is important that Committee processes support the efficient and effective operation of the regime. As the Monitoring Team keeps the Committee apprised of the evolving threat posed by ISIL, Al-Qaida and their affiliates, the Committee will also work closely with key actors, including the other relevant Security Council sanctions committees.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Van Bohemen for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism.

(*spoke in English*)

On behalf of the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), I wish to give a brief overview of the developments in the work of the Committee and its Executive Directorate (CTED). The Committee, with the support of CTED and as mandated by paragraph 24 of resolution 2178 (2014), has undertaken a wide range of actions to address the threat of foreign terrorist fighters and is currently developing new tools to facilitate its dialogue with Member States on their implementation of resolution 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005), as well as its analysis of measures taken pursuant to resolution 2178 (2014).

The Committee has devoted much of its efforts over recent months to identifying principal gaps and good practices in stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters and to building on the analysis produced, including the three reports issued by the Security Council on the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters and ways in which Member States can strengthen countermeasures.

The third report (S/2015/975), published on 29 December 2015, provided comprehensive recommendations for all States in regions affected by the threat, as well as global thematic recommendations covering the criminalization requirements of resolution 2178 (2014), the prosecution of foreign terrorist fighters, border control and law enforcement measures to prevent inter-State travel, countering incitement and violent extremism, preventing financing of foreign terrorist fighters, international cooperation, and human rights and the rule of law.

The Committee also continued to enhance its cooperation with international and regional organizations and relevant United Nations bodies and partners. The Council published, on 23 December 2015, the conclusions of the Committee's special meeting (S/2015/939, annex I) with Member States and relevant international and regional organizations on stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, held in Madrid on 27 and 28 July 2015, and the guiding principles on foreign terrorist fighters (S/2015/939, annex II), adopted following the meeting, as well as the declaration of the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and

of Interior, held on the occasion of the special meeting (S/2015/939, annex III).

The guiding principles were identified by the participants in the special meeting and build upon existing good practices identified by international and regional organizations and forums. Intended to assist Member States in their efforts to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, they focus on the detection of, intervention against and prevention of the incitement, recruitment and facilitation of foreign terrorist fighters; preventing their travel; and the criminalization, prosecution — including prosecution strategies for returnees — international cooperation, and the rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees.

As the Council will recall, in January 2016, in my capacity as Chair of the Committee, I submitted to the Council the global surveys of Member States' implementation of resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005). The surveys rely on data compiled on the basis of information and updates provided by Member States to the Committee; reports on country visits — the Executive Directorate has visited more than 90 States on behalf of the Committee; regional workshops; and information provided by international, regional and subregional organizations and partners. Both surveys take stock of the progress achieved and remaining challenges in implementing the measures under resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005), which are also relevant to stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, pursuant to resolution 2178 (2014). I would also note that the Committee, with the support of CTED, has been actively addressing the use of information and communications technology for terrorist purposes.

Last December, the Committee held a special meeting on this growing and significant threat, attended by Member States, international and regional organizations, private sector leaders, and representatives of civil society. The participants considered ways to develop a multi-stakeholder approach to this challenge, including with respect to the evolution of the threat, the need to strengthen public/private cooperation, self-regulation by the private sector, and online counter-messaging. The Committee, with the support of CTED, intends to hold another special meeting on this topic, at which it will take stock of progress made since the December meeting, including partnerships established with key stakeholders from the private sector.

As Council members are aware, I recently chaired a joint open briefing, together with my colleague from New Zealand, focusing on new and emerging terrorist-financing trends. We were joined by the President of the Financial Action Task Force and by representatives from the private sector. As members are also aware, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and its affiliates pose significant new challenges to the international community, owing in large part to their exploitation of the natural and economic resources of territories under their control, bank robbery, extortion and the looting of antiquities. The counter-strategy of the international community focuses in part on disrupting financial flows to and from ISIL-controlled areas and ensuring the protection of the international financial system. However, that presents significant challenges for many Member States.

In order to disrupt terrorist networks, we must target their income and their ability to provide resources to sleeper cells. By cutting off the flow of funds to such groups we can significantly undermine their capacity to recruit for, incite, plan and carry out attacks. Countering the financing of terrorism must therefore form an integral part of national and regional counter-terrorism strategies.

Terrorist groups continue to identify innovative funding methods, and the international community, especially those Member States directly affected, must be equipped with the tools required to mount an effective response. In that regard, the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) — jointly with the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015), concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities — will convene a three-day joint CTC/1267 Committee special meeting on terrorist financing in December, with the participation of the Financial Action Task Force.

At our recent joint open briefing, it became clear that enhanced cooperation within and between public sector agencies, both domestically and internationally, was critical to identifying foreign terrorist fighters and preventing their travel. Participants discussed the possibility that Member States' financial intelligence units be given access to personal information such as social security and tax records, subject to domestic data and privacy laws, and proposed that they share information more effectively, both among themselves

and with other relevant agencies. They also noted the need for deeper public-private partnerships in identifying financing networks of foreign terrorist fighters, as well as the need to establish financial profiles and patterns to support the work of investigators.

The Committee continues to adopt a risk-based approach, where appropriate, aimed at facilitating capacity-building tailored to each State's perception of its own needs. The huge diversity of States in terms of their size and population; the nature of the various threats posed by foreign terrorist fighters to particular States; as well as States' relative capacities and vulnerabilities to address terrorist threats, makes a one-size-fits-all approach impractical. States should therefore develop responses to the threat of terrorism based on their respective national security concerns, rather than on a fixed template that might have little relevance to their situation.

The Committee has also consistently recalled the position of the Council that all measures taken by Member States to combat terrorism must comply with all their obligations under international law and that States should adopt such measures in accordance with international law, in particular international human rights law, refugee law and humanitarian law.

The Committee recognizes that its effectiveness rests not just on what is done but when it is done. To that end, it has been implementing measures to act more rapidly in its dialogue with Member States, and thus to improve its responsiveness to their needs based upon the principle of national ownership, without sacrificing the quality of that dialogue or the opportunity for States to carefully consider their responses to the Committee's outreach efforts. One example in that regard is the Committee's request that the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) present its findings immediately upon its return from follow-up visits. This year CTED also reported to the Committee on recent visits to Ghana, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan and Iraq. Moreover, the Committee arranged an informal meeting with representatives of Iraq, the donor community and technical assistance providers and implementing agencies to discuss collective efforts in assisting Iraq in its counter-terrorism capacity-building. That marks a significant improvement on previous practice, and the Committee looks forward to strengthening its dialogue with each of those Member States.

The Committee has adopted its 2016 work programme, which covers all the required objectives and related activities. The Committee will continue to take the necessary measures to ensure a practical, responsive and dynamic approach to its dialogue with all Member States.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to Ambassador Oyarzun Marchesi.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your briefing as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001). I also thank the Ambassador of New Zealand for his briefing as Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities.

My statement as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) has been approved by all the members of the Security Council, and as such members will be quite familiar with it. I shall therefore not read out the statement in full, but will limit myself to a much-condensed version. The Member States with us today that are not members of the Council will be able to read the official version approved by the Committee on the 1540 Committee's website, where it will be posted in a few minutes.

When I last briefed the Security Council, on 22 December 2015 (see S/PV.7597) I spoke of the extreme violence being perpetrated by terrorists and their supporters around the world. That violence is much more intense today, and the terrorists are much closer to the possibility of acquiring or producing weapons of mass destruction. We are facing a real threat, as best illustrated by the fact that an Interpol report states that Da'esh has a chemical weapons programme under way. As such, the threat is clearly a global one. The European Parliament agrees with that as well, stating a week ago that there was a real risk of a Da'esh attack.

Prevention is without a doubt the best solution to that threat. And the best preventive tool available to the international community in the area of non-proliferation is resolution 1540 (2004). It is therefore essential that

the comprehensive review of the resolution, to which we are deeply committed, be both ambitious and all-inclusive. I will now turn to the preliminary steps we are working on, which we must develop further this year, in particular at the third session of the review, to take place next week in Madrid.

First, with regard to implementation, it is important to highlight that there has been a continued increase in the number of measures adopted by States to implement resolution 1540 (2004), however, we still face the challenge of achieving its universalization. We need to strengthen direct interaction between the Committee and States that need our support. For that to become reality, it is crucial that we make the non-proliferation regime and its architecture more efficient.

Secondly, the Committee is aware of the fact that we need to improve the assistance mechanism by way of a process that more precisely defines requests, with a view to making it easier to provide assistance to States and international organizations. That issue was thoroughly addressed at the recently held African Union meeting in Addis Ababa

Thirdly, support and greater coordination for the various programmes of specialized international organizations will be a key part of the comprehensive review. We need to focus in particular on areas such as biological weapons, where there is no mechanism comparable to the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is the relevant specialized body for nuclear weapons, or the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which is the specialized body for chemical weapons.

Finally, with regard to outreach and transparency, we must make a greater effort to interact more with Member States to make the work of the 1540 Committee known, while bearing in mind that there is a direct correlation between the States that are most involved in resolution 1540 (2004) and their participation in the events. It is worth mentioning that the involvement of civil society enriches the Committee with ideas from different sectors, as was seen in the informal meeting with experts held in April, where we were able to talk about new advances in science and technology, and in the consultations we held with academics in early April.

In my previous briefing, I said that industry was a key partner in the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). Thanks to Germany's support, that will be a cornerstone of the open consultations that will take place at Headquarters from 20 to 22 June, at which Member States, international organizations and selected representatives of civil society will be able to contribute their ideas to the comprehensive review.

I will end where I began — on the evolving nature of terrorism affects all States directly and indirectly. Non-State actors are already fully engaged in acquiring technologies and materials that will allow them to obtain weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, we must also be fully engaged in preventing them from doing so. What better way is there to do so than the comprehensive review of our most powerful and effective weapon in countering their activities, which is resolution 1540 (2004).

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ambassador Oyarzun Marchesi for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the other members of the Security Council.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We start by thanking the Egyptian presidency for convening this meeting. The holding of open briefings by the Chairs of the Sanctions Committees increases the transparency of Security Council proceedings, which the United Nations membership has been calling, for especially in matters of great political sensibility, such as the sanctions regimes.

We took note with appreciation of the briefings provided by the Chairs of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities; the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism; and the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) — respectively, the Permanent Representatives of New Zealand, Egypt and Spain.

We acknowledge the existence of organic linkages and encourage the strengthening of cooperation among the Sanctions and Counter-Terrorism Committees, their respective groups of experts and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), as well as among United Nations specialized agencies, Member States and the wider international community in dealing with the impending threats to peace and security caused by terrorism worldwide.

The holding of this meeting less than a month after the debate on 14 April on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts (see S/PV.7670) demonstrates the Council's commitment to combating the threat posed by terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

The report by the Chair of the 1267 Committee highlights the expansion of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant beyond Iraq and Syria, the shifting of its centre of gravity due to military pressure, with ensuing loss of territory and destruction of different significant parts of its oil infrastructure. A matter of great concern expressed in the report is the return home to many foreign terrorist fighters and the additional threat caused by those developments, which as the Chair of the Committee stresses, pose a greater risk to the international community and an opportunity for improving the impact and effectiveness of the 1267 (1999) sanctions regime, which has the ultimate goal of degrading and destroying that lethal terrorist organization.

Notwithstanding the fact that sanctions by themselves are not enough to win the fight against terrorism, it is imperative to strengthen global international, regional and subregional cooperation, as well as national capacities at all levels, and to find creative ways to launch an ideological struggle to successfully confront the terrorists. The phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters calls for enhanced cooperation among States, international and regional organizations, relevant United Nations bodies and partners to put an end to the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, which is an approach that should be at the centre of the Committees' efforts and runs parallel with the activities employed by the Counter-Terrorism Committees.

The guiding principles identified to assist Member States in their efforts to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, the global surveys on the implementation of resolution 1373 (2001), the use of information and communication technologies for terrorist purposes, the trends in terrorist financing and the efforts to cut the flow of funds and undermine the terrorists' capacities to exploit natural and economic resources in territories under their control are matters identified in the Chair's report as fundamental responses States should develop for their security concerns.

Still concerning the report by the Chair of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, we share his view on the need to implement measures permitting the Committee to act more rapidly and efficiently in its dialogue with Member States by improving its responsiveness to their needs based upon the principle of national ownership.

The extreme violence of acts perpetrated by the terrorists substantiate that the realization of their already proclaimed determination to make use of weapons of mass destruction would be a development of catastrophic dimensions, which as the Chair of the 1540 Committee reminds us, can be avoided only by constantly vigilance by Member States to prevent non-State actors from acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction. It is against such a backdrop that the 1540 Committee is undertaking a comprehensive review on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2014) highlighting the need for continued vigilance at national, regional and international levels, along with sustained and intensified support from the Committee. The priorities and the main thrust highlighted by the Chair of the Committee of the comprehensive review of the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) has our support and encouragement by streamlining Security Council efforts and strengthening cooperation and effective coordination between the Committee and overall framework set up to combat terrorism, including the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Sanctions Committees related to terrorists activities.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, Ambassador Van Bohemen and Ambassador Oyarzun Marchesi for your respective briefings. The three Ambassadors have been actively promoting the efforts of the Counter-Terrorism Committee; the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities; and the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) to implement their mandates and coordinate international counter-terrorism and non-proliferation efforts. China commends the three Committees on the substantial progress they have made in their respective work.

The 1267 (1999) Committee is an important anti-terrorism mechanism of the Council. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al-Qaida and other terrorist forces pose a serious threat to international peace and security. The international community should use a variety of political, economic and cultural means to design comprehensive measures and

effective responses. China supports the efforts of the 1267 Committee, within its mandate under Council resolutions, strengthen the communication with the relevant countries, to strengthen the review of listings and delistings and periodically review the sanctions list; strengthen cooperation with monitors and monitoring groups; and make greater contributions to the cause of international anti-terrorism. We hope that the work of the Committee will be further improved and that all Members States will, in accordance with the Committee's rules of procedure, continue to support and facilitate its work and fully uphold the authority and efficacy of the sanctions mechanism.

The Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) represents an important platform for strengthening the capacity-building of the Member States and international cooperation in combating terrorism. At present, terrorist organizations are using the Internet and social media as important means to carry out their activities. China supports the efforts of the CTC and the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) to improve the assessment of the implementation of anti-terrorism resolutions, carry out country visits, organize meetings and undertake activities that are designed to fight the use of the Internet to incite and finance terrorism, in the framework of implementing Council resolutions, and to offer necessary technical assistance to Member States. China hopes that the CTC will continue to strengthen communication with Member States and promote its coordination and cooperation with relevant United Nations agencies in order to strengthen the capacity of Member States and promote international cooperation in the field of anti-terrorism and maintain international peace and security.

The Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) is an important mechanism in the field of non-proliferation. In the future, the focus should be on the comprehensive review of the status of implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). The comprehensive review is an important measure to ensure the effective implementation of the resolution and helps to further strengthen the awareness and capacities of countries against proliferation. We need to come to grips with the major threats outlined in the resolution and prohibit non-State actors from engaging in proliferation activities, especially for terrorist purposes. We must also avoid introducing other complex issues that do not fall within the purview of resolution 1540 (2004). The Committee must play its major role in assisting in the implementation of the resolution, strengthen its assistance mechanism and satisfy the assistance needs of the countries. Moreover, all relevant activities carried out by countries should further the work of the Committee.

China is an important member of the international campaign against terrorism. The terrorist forces of the East Turkestan Liberation Organization, represented by the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, seriously threaten not only China's national security but also regional security and stability. China supports the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We believe that anti-terrorism strategies should comply with uniform standards and not be linked to a specific ethnicity or religion. The United Nations and the Security Council need to play a major role in anti-terrorism efforts, in compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We need to strengthen our effective coordination in order to wage a high-intensity campaign against terrorism.

We attach great importance to international cooperation in the field of anti-terrorism. As the President of the Council in April, China convened an open debate against terrorism (see S/PV.7670) that served to strengthen the political resolve of all parties against terrorism and devised a series of new anti-terrorism measures and recommendations, lending new impetus to the coordination and cooperation of international efforts against terrorism.

China firmly opposes the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). We insist on resolving proliferation problems through political and diplomatic means and on effectively preserving and strengthening the international the non-proliferation regime by fostering an international and regional security environment of mutual confidence and cooperation in order to remove the motivations for WMD proliferation.

China supports exchanges and cooperation among the various parties in the field of non-proliferation. In September 2015, China hosted a workshop for the 1540 national focal points in the Asia-Pacific region, which has played a positive role in strengthening the capacity-building of the Asia-Pacific countries in implementing the resolution. China will continue to comprehensively participate in and promote international cooperation in the fields of anti-terrorism and counter-proliferation in order to promote further progress in relevant fields. China will continue to support the efforts of the 1267

Committee, the CTC and the 1540 Committee to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the mandates set forth in the Council resolutions, while making new contributions to international cooperation against terrorism and non-proliferation.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Chairmen of the Committees with counter-terrorism mandates for their detailed briefings. The effectiveness of the work of those bodies will to a large extent determine progress in strengthening the central coordinating role of the United Nations and the Security Council in the field of counter-terrorist cooperation.

Today, the world is facing an unprecedented upsurge of terrorist activity. The main threat stems from the so-called Islamic State. Despite its significant territorial, human and financial losses, to a large extent achieved through Russia's Aerospace Defence Forces, the group misses no opportunity to sew terror and its pseudo-ideology. Its attempts to gain a foothold in Libya, Afghanistan, Yemen and other areas of instability are clear evidence of that.

Recently, the Security Council carried out significant work in strengthening the international legal framework for countering the terrorist threat by suppressing its fuelling and financing and improving the work of the sanctions and monitoring mechanisms. In that regard, resolution 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015) were the most important steps. Today, the main problems lie in their full-fledged good-faith implementation both by States Members and within the framework of the Organization as a whole. In that regard, States that border conflict zones bear a special responsibility.

We have serious questions about the primary analytical materials of the Secretary-General and the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Group of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida, and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities. The main problem is that they contain insufficient assessments and are not sufficiently concrete. Moreover, such an approach is a necessary prerequisite to a deeper understanding of the thrust of the problem, identifying problems with the implementation of Security Council decisions, and tailoring the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies in counter-terrorism efforts. There is no shortage of such data, including from open sources. We have also circulated to the Security Council a number of documents that shed light on the main channels for smuggled petroleum, artefacts and foreign terrorist fighters, as well as weapons. As is quite clear from those documents, the main routes cross Turkey and are not suppressed by Ankara.

We expect that the Secretary-General's future reports, including the May report on resolution 2253 (2015), and of the Monitoring Group will address the shortcomings that have been pointed out. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Sergey Lavrov, has repeatedly stated, this is no time to bury our heads in the sand like an ostrich. The international community must acknowledge the facts. Only in that way we will overcome a common enemy — the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

Referring to the work of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), we would like to state that we expect constructive cooperation with the group of experts, each of which possesses the requisite knowledge and expertise in terms of weapons of mass destruction and export control. The Committee continues its effective work helping countries to implement the provisions of the resolution. The number of States failing to submit relevant national reports is falling. The Group of Experts is visiting specialized international forums to inform the international community on the specificities and tasks of this non-proliferation mechanism.

We are not opposed to convening consultations with international, regional and subregional organizations, industry and business representatives, subject to the understanding, however, that responsibility for implementing resolution 1540 (2004) lies with States and their administrative structures. In other words, civil society is not an independent player in this field. The main task for the subsidiary body of the Security Council in 2016 is to conclude the comprehensive review with a view to identifying existing bottlenecks in the implementation of the provisions of resolution 1540 (2004).

In our view, the Committee itself requires fine-tuning rather than radical change. We expect the States members of the Security Council to approach the final review with great care. Doing otherwise could have unpredictable consequences. That also applies to the creation of additional bureaucratic structures to address the theme of resolution 1540 (2004). We

are quite skeptical in that regard, to put it frankly. States can cooperate directly with the Committee, as is directly stated in the text of the resolution. The creation of additional formats that do not enjoy the consensus support of Committee members could lead to unnecessary duplication and even undermine the work of that subsidiary body of the Security Council.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): The international community continues to make significant progress in degrading terrorist groups worldwide, with significant recent gains against Da'esh in Syria and Iraq, as well as Boko Haram and other Al-Qaida groups around the world. But much more needs to be done. We know that those threats persist, and have even begun to spread to other locations around the world. We continue to see Da'esh, Boko Haram and Al-Qaida affiliates radicalizing and recruiting our citizens to carry out their deeds even as they recruit new affiliate groups and establish branches around the world. Da'esh, in particular, seeks to stage more mass casualty attacks in public spaces around the world, in conflict zones and in our very own communities.

As we look at terrorist trends, we are now seeing a growing number of returning foreign terrorist fighters from Iraq and Syria posing serious threats to their countries of origin. From Brussels to Istanbul to Paris, returnees are sparking new threats, inspiring new violence and recruiting new sympathizers. The threat of Da'esh-inspired, homegrown violent extremists is also growing, as we saw in San Bernadino and elsewhere. What is clear from all that we have been seeing over the past years is that no country is immune to the terrorist threat today. That is why we must not only counter and respond to terrorist attacks, but we must also take appropriate steps to prevent radicalization to violence while ensuring that it is done in compliance with obligations under international law, including international human rights law. That requires just the sort of all-of-United-Nations and whole-of-society approach offered in the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. We applaud the Secretary-General's leadership on that issue and hope that all Member States can endorse his plan during this summer's United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review.

In addition to longer-term prevention efforts, we must continue to do more to fully implement Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 2178 (2014) and 2253 (2015), which are central to the world's counter-terrorism efforts and drive the work of two of the Council's three counter-terrorism committees. As we stressed in resolution 2253 (2015), the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999),1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida, and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities is vital to countering the threats posed by these groups, in particular their financing and recruiting activities. We appreciate Ambassador Van Bohemen's active stewardship of that Committee and thank the 1267 Committee's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team for its great work in developing helpful threat analyses. Thanks to their work, the Council has been kept updated on the changing terrorist threat picture, the challenges in implementing resolution 2253 (2015), and new areas on which the Committee and the Council should focus to better counter the financing activities of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

While implementing sanctions remains key, there is also a critical role for the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism. The Counter-Terrorism Committee's work is helping the Council to identify Member States' weaknesses in implementing the core international counter-terrorism obligations, and is driving international attention and resources towards key vulnerabilities and gaps that need to be addressed in order to stop terrorists. We appreciate Ambassador Aboulatta's active stewardship of that important committee, as well as the efforts of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) to address the full array of terrorist threats and State capability requirements, in particular against foreign terrorist fighters.

That is why the joint work between the Monitoring Team and CTED in countering foreign terrorist fighters is exemplary. That is the kind of solid and actionable analysis to better counter foreign terrorist fighter flows to Da'esh in Syria and Iraq that the Council needs to see more of. In fact, these analyses need to drive the United Nations' capacity-building efforts. We commend the development by the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) of its capacity-building implementation plan for countering the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. We call on the Council and all Member States to increase their support for the efforts of these three counter-terrorism bodies in order to better counter Da'esh and foreign terrorist fighters, including by mobilizing resources to CTITF, as it helps

to build needed capacity for those States most affected and in need of assistance.

Turning to the important work of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) to counter weapons of mass destruction terrorism, I would like to note that we see resolution 1540 (2004) as a foundational instrument in our efforts to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. We also strongly support the resolution and the work of the 1540 Committee. In light of the allegations of use of chemical weapons by ISIL, we consider that resolution to be timely and vital. We should all redouble our efforts to implement it. Initial information from the Committee's Group of Experts indicates that States have taken measures for only 48 per cent of items on which the Committee gathers data, representing a meagre 7 per cent increase in implementation of security measures since 2010. The data clearly shows that three United Nations regional groups — Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean — have much lower levels of overall implementation. That is especially troubling considering the numbers of violent non-State actors in Africa and the Middle East.

The data also indicate low levels of implementation in several policy areas, such as obligations related to securing biological and chemical items. The second comprehensive review provides an opportunity to improve implementation of the resolution. We hope all States and relevant organizations, civil society and industry will make meaningful contributions to the review, including in the United Nations open meeting on 20 to 22 June, and that we will all seriously consider ways to improve our overall implementation efforts.

I would welcome the sending by all Security Council members and all United Nations Member States of a message back to their capital — if they have not already done so — requesting the start of reflection on three main actions with regard to how we all approach resolution 1540 (2004). We think of it as the "3 S's": start, strengthen and stop. First, what new thing should we start doing? Secondly, what important thing should we continue to do or strengthen? Thirdly, what should we stop doing because it does not work or is irrelevant?

As part of our support for the work of the 1540 Committee, in March the United States submitted an updated report on recent nuclear-security-related measures we have taken to implement our obligations under the resolution. The report can be found on the 1540 Committee's website. Such reporting also supports the overall objectives of the Nuclear Security Summit, including elements of the recently adopted United Nations action plan, to which we remain committed. We are also preparing to submit a similar updated report on biological security measures. Through this year's comprehensive review, we need to ensure that resolution 1540 (2004) and the Committee can evolve and retain their critical importance and relevance in addressing the risks that the world faces today.

We look forward to working with the other members of the Security Council, as well as the broader international community, to achieving that goal.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me thank you, Mr. President, for convening this briefing on the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities; the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism; and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) on preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We are grateful for the briefings Ambassadors Gerad Van Bohemen of New Zealand, Amr Abdellatif Aboulatta of Egypt and Román Oyarzun Marchesi of Spain, in their capacities are the respective chairs of those subsidiary bodies. We thank them for their leadership and for the work they are doing at the helm of the committees.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is convinced that the fight against terrorism must be carried out within the framework of international cooperation, in strict accordance with existing international and regional instruments in that area, the rules of international law, fully respecting the sovereignty of States, human rights and fundamental freedoms. In that regard, Venezuela reiterates its categorical rejection of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, because they constitute a flagrant violation of international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law.

The actions of violent extremism perpetrated by terrorist groups in countries of Africa and the Middle East have intensified. Terrorism therefore continues to pose a serious threat to international peace and

security. Accordingly, we have no choice but to fully and effectively implement the measures that have been drawn up to prohibit incitement, the financing of terrorism, training and the transfer of arms to terrorist groups and non-State actors, in accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. My country reiterates its concern about the nature and activities of non-State actors, as they constitute an ongoing threat and source of violence and, in most cases, they evolve into terrorist groups. The Security Council must take strong measures to prevent the training, financing and supply of arms to them.

We must act with a holistic perspective in the fight against terrorism. Above and beyond combating terrorism, the international community must focus on overcoming the root causes of armed conflicts that have impacted the Middle East and North Africa. The humanitarian tragedy in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Libya, among other places, and the actions of Al-Qaida, the Al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and associated groups demand from the international community systematic and forceful responses to prevent, combat and eradicate the scourge of terrorism.

With regard to the work of the Committee on Al-Qaida and associated individuals, we believe that body serves as an important tool in the broader fight against terrorism. Although in recent months ISIS has suffered significant defeats in Syria and Iraq, the activities of that terrorist organization continue to be a source of concern for the international community. According to the latest reports of the Committee's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, the terrorist threat has shifted its approach with regard to financing, and the threat continues with attacks on heavily populated areas, which have an enormous media impact.

We believe that the role played by the Ombudsperson in facilitating due process has special importance. We are of the view that this mechanism must be strengthened in order to provide greater transparency in reviewing cases of persons linked to Al-Qaida and their associated entities. We hope that, in the wake of the adoption of resolution 2253 (2015), the Office of Catherine Marchi-Uhel will be allocated the necessary resources to ensure the independence and professionalism that have been the hallmark of its work throughout its mandate to date. Moreover, it is important to highlight the work carried out the chairmanship to update the guidelines of the 1267 Committee and the work carried out by the Monitoring Group, which provides regular reports and assessments of the threat posed globally by ISIS.

Turning to the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001), concerning counter-terrorism, we welcome the fact that that subsidiary body, with the support of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), continues to focus its efforts for the full and effective implementation of the provisions set out in resolution 2178 (2014), concerning foreign terrorist fighters, and continues its work in identifying good practices and existing gaps that must be filled by Member States to combat a problem that today includes 30,000 individuals, including women and young people, from approximately 100 countries throughout the world. In that regard, we welcome the significant reports issued by that Committee in connection with the threat posed by the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters and its recommendations for comprehensively addressing this issue of global scope, taking into account, inter alia, of the challenges faced by numerous States in terms of criminalizing the and prosecuting foreign terrorist fighters.

Venezuela acknowledges the importance of improving border control capacities, particularly in areas adjacent to influence of terrorist groups. It is also important that we continue our efforts to dismantle the sources of financing of those organizations to restrict and curb their criminal activities. In the same vein, it is crucial to make progress in developing innovative strategies to counter and refute extremist narratives and ideologies and to foment critical thinking in society, in order to prevent radicalization, recruitment and the mobilization of both human and economic resources.

With regard to the work of the 1540 Committee and measures to prevent terrorist groups from acquiring weapons of mass destruciton, we believe that the comprehensive review of the work done by the Committee over the past five years is essential at a time when the use of such weapons by terrorist groups, particularly chemical weapons, has become a genuine and alarming reality, as is indicated in reported cases of the use of such weapons in Syria and Iraq. As far as Venezuela is concerned, the comprehensive review process must be focused on the establishment of both human and technical capacity-building throughout the world, particularly in those countries that are lagging farthest being in implementing the resolution. The

main strength of resolution 1540 lies in its preventive capacity, with cooperation and assistance being among its major tools. Through its coordination of the working group on the national implementation of the 1540 Committee, Venezuela is working actively to ensure that the comprehensive review process is successful.

Within the context of the comprehensive review, the Committee must work towards establishing a clear link between measures to be implemented within the context of resolution 1540 (2040) and development, given that development is the main and overriding goal of developing countries. Moreover, in order to maximize its effectiveness, the Committee has to duly take into account the context in which the resolution is being implemented. A significant number of countries throughout the world neither produce nor export materials that could be used to manufacture a weapon of mass destruction, but they could nonetheless still serve as transit points or shipment points for non-State actors. Therefore, the work of the 1540 Committee must focus on the implementation of those aspects and provisions of the resolution that are more directly related to the risks associated with each country.

We need to take into account that, while the assistance requested by States in nuclear and chemical areas can be channelled efficiently through the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the same is not the case in the area of biological weapons because the Biological Weapons Convention's Implementation Support Unit does not have the necessary human or financial capacity to fulfil that role. That constitutes a very serious gap in an area of particular complexity and danger. The Committee should seriously consider all potential measures to reverse that major shortcoming.

Finally, we would like to underscore the point that, irrespective of the need to improve the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) and the work of the 1540 Committee in providing assistance and follow-up in monitoring of the implementation of national plans, its mandate needs to continue to be characterized by collaboration and support.

Mr. Okamura (Japan): I would like to join other members in thanking the Chairs of the three Committees, the Permanent Representatives of New Zealand, Egypt and Spain, for sharing the activities of their Committees with us, as well as for their excellent work in serving as Chairs.

Today we face terrorist attacks all over the world almost every week. I fully agree with the Permanent Representatives of New Zealand and Egypt that countering foreign terrorist fighters and terrorist financing is the key to coping with the serious threats posed by terrorists. The Security Council addressed those issues in resolutions 2178 (2014) and 2253 (2015). The full implementation of those resolutions is critical. Japan has been strengthening its border security and counter-terrorist financing measures to better implement the relevant resolutions. For example, we have adopted and improved biometric tools, such as fingerprint readers, with the operating function of fingerprint identification for identity certificates and passports and with facial images in the identity certificates as tips to affirm a traveller's real identification. In October 2015, we enacted new legislation to better cover terrorist funds.

Based on those experiences, we urge all Member States to fully implement the resolutions. Terrorists exploit vulnerable countries that are short of legislation, equipment and training, which they use as loopholes. Japan has been assisting countries on capacity-building for enhancing the implementation of measures to plug those loopholes. In particular, Japan has provided assistance to various countries in the Middle East and Africa amounting to nearly $28 million in just the past two years.

Terrorists usually try to disguise themselves and use forged travel documents when crossing borders. To discover possible terrorists, Japan has provided fingerprint readers together with training for immigration officers. The officers can help to detect the real identity of terrorists by matching their fingerprints with those in databases. Similarly, in order to cut off terrorist financing, we have provided assistance on enacting laws on counter-terrorist financing and on the building of networks for confiscating criminal proceeds. Those measures provide authorities in the region with a basis for sharing information, freezing assets and prosecuting terrorist financiers in a concerted manner.

To combat terrorism more effectively, I wish to highlight the linkage between terrorist activities and illicit businesses. Many terrorists draw profits through illegal business, such as drug trafficking and human trafficking, as well as oil smuggling, in close cooperation with transnational organized crime. Therefore, we need to take into account those connections between terrorists activities and underground businesses when

we elaborate counter-terrorism measures. We must highlight resolution 2195 (2014), which stresses the need to work collectively to prevent and combat terrorism benefitting from transnational organized crime.

Strengthening the international non-proliferation regime — with resolution 1540 (2004) at its core — is also a high priority for Japan. Capacity-building again has a key role to play, and Japan is committed to providing assistance in that field. For example, for more than 20 years, Japan has hosted Asian export-control seminars to share best practices among participants. It is also important for the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) to enhance cooperation with relevant international organizations. It was very fruitful for the Committee to have been briefed by the Secretary-General of the World Customs Organization, Mr. Kunio Mikuriya, on 9 February. He said that, although developing countries used to consider customs bodies as revenue-generating agencies, they are now increasingly aware of the customs role in border controls for national security. I was very much encouraged to hear that remark.

Finally, in response to rapidly evolving methods of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, it is necessary to review, update and enhance resolution 1540 (2004). Japan is determined to actively engage in the ongoing comprehensive review process under the strong leadership of the Permanent Representative of Spain.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Mr. President, I welcome your outstanding initiative in organizing this joint briefing on the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated groups, undertakings and entities; the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism; and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004). I would also like to convey the Senegalese delegation's most heartfelt congratulations to the Chairs of the Committees — which is to say, to you, Mr. President, as well as to Ambassador Van Bohemen and Ambassador Oyarzun Marchesi — for the outstanding quality of their briefings and their leadership in heading the activities of those bodies.

There could be no more opportune time for convening this meeting, given the recurring violent terrorist attacks throughout the world. It is therefore more than urgent to counter the attempts of extremist groups to take possession of weapons of mass destruction. However, suppression and military responses can never be sufficient in themselves in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. Given terrorist groups' ability to change and adapt to a situation, the fight requires a multisectoral approach, one that necessarily includes preventive, suppressive and protective measures.

Resolution 1540 (2004), a preventive text that the Security Council adopted unanimously, founded on Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, nearly 12 years ago, constitutes a major advantage in our attempts to prevent non-State actors from getting their hands on weapons of mass destruction. The comprehensive review of the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004), both in a retrospective as well as in a forward-looking way, affords us a unique opportunity to refocus our actions and strategies in a comprehensive, coordinated and cohesive approach to meet the numerous challenges facing peace and security throughout the world. The rapid progress in terms of science and technology, globalization, as well as the constant change in terms of the business world, are all factors that non-State actors can utilize to assist them in gaining hold of weapons of mass destruction.

My delegation welcomes the regional approach, which the 1540 Committee has decided to adopt in its programme of work. In partnership with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the first inter-parliamentary meeting on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) took place in Abijan on 22 and 23 February and was attended by more than 72 African legislators from 18 States. The meeting was an opportunity to discuss issues related to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in Africa and to reflect on ways to strengthen the national legal frameworks in place to implement the resolution. This initiative should be reproduced in all regions of the world, given the crucial role that lawmakers play in the development and adoption of legal frameworks necessary for avoiding the consequences that could occur if nuclear, chemical or biological weapons were to fall into the hands of non-State actors, including terrorists.

The other event that reflects the partnership between the 1540 Committee and Africa is the participation of

the newest members of the Committee, including the Chair, in the assistance and review conference on the implementation of resolution 1540 in Africa, organized by the African Union on 6 and 7 April in Addis Ababa. We also call for extending the cooperation between the Committee and the African countries, most of which have received its support as they implement the resolution. To that end, strengthening the Committee's capacities is more necessary than ever, if it is going to extend its assistance activities to all countries that request them.

Terrorist groups are increasingly using the Internet and social media to incite people to violence and to recruit, finance and plan terrorist acts. In this regard, it is essential that the relevant provisions of resolutions 1540 (2004), 2178 (2013) and 2253 (2015) be implemented effectively by States, in particular through strengthening their cooperation in information sharing and through better collaboration with private service providers with a view to improving regulation and control systems.

In addition, the recruitment by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other extremist groups of foreign terrorist fighters, whose number exceeds 30,000 and who come from over 100 countries, is another major challenge that we must confront in an urgent, effective and coordinated manner. These fighters are a real threat to their countries of origin, as well as to transit and destination countries. In our view, to eradicate this phenomenon, better cooperation with respect to border control is imperative. However, the measures to be taken to this end should not undermine the principle of the free movement of people and goods. In this regard, my delegation wishes to commend the remarkable work done by the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001), which deserves our full support and cooperation, given its countless activities taken on under the guidance of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, whose recommendations contained in the country visit reports should be regularly assessed with the full cooperation of the States concerned.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Senegal's willingness and unwavering commitment to remaining active in the effective implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Council in the fight against terrorism, particularly resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011), 2253 (2015), 1373 (2001) and 1540 (2004).

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, I would like to say that yesterday, which saw the first meeting under the Egyptian presidency of the Security Council (see S/PV.7685), after listening the briefings of the representatives of the Red Cross and Médicins Sans Frontières in this Chamber, I could see how difficult it is follow satisfy all protocols for running these meetings, so I wanted to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your handling the role of president. I also wanted to assure you, Sir, of the full cooperation of the delegation of Uruguay. At the same time, I would like to join those who preceded me in thanking the delegation of China for the excellent work accomplished during its presidency in the month of April.

I would also like to thank the three Chairs for their briefings on the activities of their respective Committees, as well as the Groups of Experts that support the work of the three Committees.

I will be very brief. My comments actually apply to the work of all of three Committees since each of them are different facets of the same risk that is threatening international peace and security today.

First, I would like to reaffirm Uruguay's commitment to freedom, democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and tolerance. All of these are values that terrorism is seeking to eradicate from the face of the earth. For that reason, we energetically repudiate their activities and their world view. The success of the work of the Committees depends essentially on the responsibility of States in implementing the decisions and recommendations of the Security Council. The exercise of responsibility requires above all the will of States to comply with their obligations. I emphasize that there must be resolute will and a strong commitment from States, and I say this because there has been a distinct impression that such will and commitment have been lacking in certain quarters.

But in addition to will, there must also be capacity, and the need to build capacity is a theme that was touched upon by several colleagues who preceded me this morning, including Mr. Yoshifumi Okamura, who provided us with a detailed analysis of the various aspects of capacity-building and institution-building. This is essential for implementing and strengthening the decisions and measures adopted at the Committee level.

The various degrees of non-compliance are often not the result of a lack of will, but the result of lack of capacity. Something that might seem simple for some,

such as border controls, is something that for others entails huge prior capacity-building, in terms, for example, of personnel — a trained, educated, equipped staff. Infrastructure is also needed, from buildings to communications and transportation infrastructure. Customs staff is needed, and it must be paid well enough to withstand the temptation of bribery. Capacity-building is therefore at the crux of the ability of a State to comply with the task we have given it.

International cooperation in this area is therefore crucial. When I speak of international cooperation, I mean not only the United Nations, but also international financial institutions and the different ways to raise the level of development of peoples so that they can take on both the material aspects of implementing resolutions as well as the ultimate way of beating terrorism, which is by changing minds. We must achieve a level of development in which terrorism is no longer seen in the lives of our peoples as a viable option.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): I join earlier speakers in thanking Ambassadors Van Bohemen and Oyarzun Marchesi, and you, Mr. President, for the briefings provided in your capacities as Chairs of your respective Committees. I also wish to express my delegation's sincere appreciation to the Ambassadors for their able stewardship of those Committees. I also take this opportunity to extend my appreciation to the respective Groups of Experts and Monitoring Teams supporting the Committees.

Malaysia reiterates its long-standing commitment to our collective effort to combat the scourge of terrorism and eradicate it from our midst. The work of the three Committees under discussion represents an integrated bulwark against the threat posed by potential terrorist acts and actors. In that context, we continue to believe that joint briefings such as today's provide an important opportunity for holistically reviewing and assessing our efforts to that end, as well as providing us with a space where we can identify areas with the potential for further synergies and cooperation between and among the Committees. For example, a common strain running through all their work concerns outreach to partners and stakeholders, including Member States, international organizations such as Interpol, the Financial Action Task Force, the World Trade Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Air Transport Association, civil society and academia, as well as the private sector. Such activities are critical to enhancing understanding of the various regimes and their mechanisms and contributing to their improved implementation. Such efforts must continue to be a central focus for the work of all the Committees, and in that regard, we welcome the commitment of all three Committee Chairs to continuing that engagement, including through open briefings and consultations.

The adoption in December of resolution 2253 (2015) and the January report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/92) accompanying it have brought the evolving nature of the threat posed by terrorist actors, especially Da'esh, into sharper focus. As Ambassador Oyarzun Marchesi noted in his briefing, there is evidence that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant is actively pursuing a chemical weapons programme. While we note the existence in relation to that area of strong international institutions, particularly the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which monitors the international trade in chemical substances and related technologies and equipment, the regime of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) provides another layer of protection for guarding against the possible acquisition, development and use of such substances by potential terrorist actors. Against the backdrop of that evolving threat, and within the context of the ongoing comprehensive review of resolution 1540 (2004), my delegation would like to stress the importance of addressing the gaps in the current framework, particularly on the biological and toxic weapons side.

Another area of particular interest to my delegation is the possibility of replicating the assistance matching model, as demonstrated last month at the African regional meeting in Addis Ababa, in other regions, including my own. In noting the preliminary findings highlighted by the Chair of the 1540 Committee in his briefing, my delegation stands ready to continue to work closely with all Council members, as well as other partners and stakeholders, in order to ensure a successful outcome for the review.

The recent spate of terrorist attacks around the world highlights a disturbing trend in the complexity and sophistication of terrorists' planning and execution of their attacks. We share the view that the growth of foreign terrorist fighters flocking to theatres of conflict around the world poses a future threat as well as an immediate one, including to their home countries, even if it is not necessarily a definite one. As Ambassador Van Bohemen noted, such fighters will return home battle-hardened, radicalized and well networked.

A further threat is posed by the expansion of Da'esh and its affiliates to other territories. It is crucial to recognize that the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addresses primarily the front end of the problem. In order to address it more comprehensively, the continuity and synergies between the Committee and its work could be further explored and, where they already exist, further deepened with other relevant mechanisms and institutions at the national, regional and international levels. In that connection, we support the Chair of the Committee's call to Member States to actively engage with it, including by submitting the necessary implementation reports.

On that note, I would like to conclude by stating our strong approval of and support for the substantial analytical and norm-setting work being actively undertaken by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate under the guidance of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, as you highlighted in your briefing, Mr. President.

Mrs. Audouard (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the Ambassadors of New Zealand and Spain, for today's briefings and for the leadership shown by all three countries in chairing the Counter-Terrorism Committee, the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities. Terrorism continues to be one of the world's greatest threats to international peace and security, as the all-too-frequent attacks that saturate the news remind us.

The Chair of the 1267 Committee emphasized that the past year saw the Committee's activities refocused on the threat posed by Da'esh and its affiliate groups. In that regard, the adoption of resolution 2253 (2015) was an important step forward in addressing the current terrorist threat. The 1267 Committee carries out at least two essential tasks that France considers extremely important, one of them being analysing the terrorist threat through the very detailed and valuable reports of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities. But I should also commend the quality of the joint briefings with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate on such major subjects as foreign terrorist fighters and combating terrorism financing.

The second is the implementation and rigorous monitoring of the sanctions list. In that regard, we encourage all States Members of the United Nations to continue to submit requests for the inclusion of names on the list. But in order to maintain the regime's credibility, its procedures must also respect the fundamental freedoms of the individuals on the list. The establishment of the post of an Ombudsperson for the regime represents an unprecedented effort on the part of the Council to improve its procedural safeguards, and I should commend Ms. Marchi-Uhel's outstanding work on the job.

The Counter-Terrorism Committee also fills two essential and complementary functions. The first is doing as much as possible to raise States' awareness of new trends in the ever-changing terrorist threat. In that regard, the Counter Terrorism-Committee Executive Directorate's recent work on the issues of data on travellers and on foreign terrorist fighters returning from conflict zones is particularly important. The Committee's second function is monitoring States' implementation of resolution 1373 (2001) and their fight again terrorism and its financing generally, but also their efforts regarding other resolutions, such as 1624 (2005), on combating incitement to commit acts of terrorism, and 2178 (2014), on foreign terrorist fighters. It is therefore crucial that States accept visits from the Executive Directorate so as to enable it to assess their systems for combating terrorism and make the best possible recommendations. It is also essential to ensure that the United Nations can implement technical assistance programmes based on those assessments and recommendations. We therefore consider it fundamental to ensure that the Executive Directorate continues to work closely with the other United Nations bodies involved in combating terrorism in order to carry out such projects.

Finally, I would like to comment briefly on the important work of the 1540 Committee under Spain's dynamic leadership. Unfortunately, the risk of biological, chemical, radiological and nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists is real. The especially worrying information reaching us from Iraq and Syria means that we can no longer rule out that possibility.

To that we have to add the doubts that remain regarding Syria's declaration of its chemical programme to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the potential for the existence of residual capacity in Syria, which only increases that risk and which we take very seriously.

However, it would be unfair not to emphasize the significant achievements of resolution 1540 (2004) since its adoption. Today an overwhelming majority of Member States have adopted measures translating the resolution's provisions into national legislation. In areas such as securing sensitive materials and goods, strengthening border controls and even, when necessary, establishing mechanisms for export controls, the international community is working to ensure that such sensitive materials and goods cannot fall into terrorists' hands.

The ongoing comprehensive review of the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) will be an opportunity to adapt and strengthen our tools against this threat. By identifying implementation gaps, strengthening assistance mechanisms and the dialogue of the Committee with other international organizations, we will be able to better prevent the risk of non-State actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

The meetings in Madrid in a few days, and especially the open meeting here in New York in June, will be major landmarks that we must build on. Spain can count on the support of France to make this year a success.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I want to begin by thanking the three briefers — not just for their briefings but for all of their hard work on our collective behalf in chairing the Committees.

It has been a decade since the General Assembly unanimously adopted the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and in that time the United Nations has developed a comprehensive architecture to counter terrorism. At our disposal we have sanctions and analysis, we have coordination from the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, and we have project delivery by the United Nations Centre for Counter-Terrorism.

But in that decade, the threat has changed. The spectre of Da'esh now hangs over so many of the crises that we deal with in this Chamber. Groups like Boko Haram terrorize some of the world's poorest people, and the Al-Qaida network has spread to fragile regions across the globe. I therefore hope that we can use the 10-year anniversary of the United Nations Strategy to adapt to this new reality, to refresh the framework and to lay the foundations for another decade of effective support to Member States as we tackle this scourge together. I should like to touch in particular on two aspects of the current threat.

First, as many colleagues have noted, Da'esh remains a major threat to international peace and security. The United Kingdom is taking action against that group within the Global Coalition to Counter Da'esh and other forums. Significant gains have been made. Da'esh is now less able to finance its hatred, less able to carry out its terror and less able to recruit followers to its sick cause. We must sustain that pressure. United Nations bodies play a vital supporting role in that effort. The Da'esh and Al-Qaida sanctions regime is tightening the noose on Da'esh finance, and United Nations panel assessments offer timely recommendations for States to address gaps in their national systems. We look to all States to fulfil their obligations under United Nations sanctions.

On foreign terrorist fighters, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate is helping to map and understanding recruitment flows. We share and welcome the assessment that the flow of people traveling to fight for Da'esh has slowed, but new trends are now emerging. These include increased numbers of returnees and, as Ambassador Van Bohemen said, so-called broken travel — traveling with multiple documents via multiple destinations to circumvent security. These shifts show that we cannot be complacent. The United Nations must facilitate the sharing of best practice and lessons learned in this area.

The second threat I want to touch on is proliferation to non-State actors, especially terrorists. Resolution 1540 (2004) is all about preventing the worst-case scenario — toxic, poisonous or radioactive materials falling into the hands of terrorists. Full, universal implementation of the resolution by all States would go quite some way towards preventing such deadly proliferation, but that universal ideal is being challenged. Continued allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria and Iraq are exactly what resolution 1540 (2004) and the Chemical Weapons Convention were designed to stop. These are horrific crimes, and all investigations aimed at bringing to justice those responsible for acquisition,

development, manufacture or use of chemical weapons must be pursued rigourously.

Ultimately, prohibited chemical weapons cannot fall into terrorist hands if they have been destroyed, in line with international law. That is why all Governments in the region should join the Chemical Weapons Convention without delay and all existing signatories must unequivocally fulfil their obligations, including full cooperation with the assessments and fact-finding missions of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Looking forward, the comprehensive review of resolution 1540 (2004) this summer will be an opportunity to strengthen our collective security on this issue. We should be bold. Areas for improvement could include strengthened regional cooperation, as neighbouring States are best placed to help each other; greater understanding of emerging proliferation challenges, because we need to keep pace with new technology; and well-resourced and structured Secretariat support so that the Committee can fulfil its mandate until 2021 and beyond. We hope that all States will engage with these ideas at the 1540 (2004) conference this summer.

Countering Da'esh, stopping foreign terrorist fighters, strengthening non-proliferation, preventing violent extremism — those are all major challenges that require a unified response and coherent support from the United Nations. United Nations counter-terrorism structures must be fit for purpose; that is why the United Kingdom supports an ambitious review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. To close, I have two key recommendations for that review.

First, we need to ensure that the concepts of prevention and an all-of-United-Nations approach, as outlined in the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, are incorporated into the United Nations system. Secondly, we must strengthen the strategic-level guidance, communications and coordination of all United Nations counter-terrorism bodies to get the most value from our resources. The United Kingdom looks forward to engaging with all States in the coming months to achieve those aims.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): Like others, I thank today's briefers for providing extensive information on the activities of their respective Committee's and beyond. We highly commend the dedicated efforts of the three Committee Chairs, as well as the work of the expert groups aimed at ensuring the comprehensive implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and at promoting effective international cooperation among all stakeholders to achieve the objectives set by these instruments.

We welcome the close collaboration of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999),1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida, and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities and the Counter-Terrorism Committee in overseeing the implementation of specific counter-terrorism measures established by the Security Council, promoting international cooperation in this field, detecting possible gaps in the existing regulations, and introducing sanctions measures with regard to individuals and entities engaged in terrorist activities. Good examples of such teamwork is the cooperation of the 1267 Committee's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate in identifying the emergence of new threats posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and its affiliates worldwide, sharing thematic reports and holding joint Committees meetings on the topic of depriving terrorists of their sources of funding.

Notwithstanding the recent achievements in the suppression of international terrorist threats posed by ISIL, especially of its financing, there are still problems that require cohesive actions to be taken both by the two Committees and by the United Nations membership at large. Among our present tasks are the prevention of terrorism spreading to other regions by staunching the flow of foreign terrorist fighters; the introduction of comprehensive strategies for dealing with returnees, who may endanger the internal security of their States of origin; countering the propaganda of terrorism and violent extremism; and combating abuse of information and communications technologies for terrorist purposes, to name but a few. We are pleased to note that these topics are duly reflected in the Committees' programmes of work. We also commend the pace kept by the expert groups in conducting their country visits and producing credible reports and recommendations aimed at strengthening national counter-terrorism mechanisms.

Apart from the activities of the international community in combating terrorism outbreaks at the global level, we also should not forget about the available tools to exert pressure on terrorists within the

existing sanctions framework, reinforced by the recent resolution 2253 (2015). In that regard, Ukraine supports the call for introducing a broad range of targeted counter-terrorism sanctions to disrupt terrorists' financing and their travelling to conflict regions.

Since 2004, resolution 1540 (2004) has played a crucial role in strengthening regional and global non-proliferation efforts. Ukraine, as a State with a nuclear-weapon past and as a full-fledged party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, is strongly committed to the implementation resolution 1540 (2004) and makes every effort to prevent non-State actors from acquiring materials and technologies that could be used as weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

At the same time, despite the measures taken by Member States to prevent proliferation risks, we are witnessing growing and even more complicated threats in this area. On the one hand, risks may arise not only from poor national legislation being in place but also from the rapid development of science and technology coupled with a lack of threat awareness among the members of academia, industry and civil society. On the other hand, international legal prohibitions have little relevance to terrorists and criminals who might be tempted to engage in attacks using chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials.

Unlike States, non-State actors pursue their hostile intentions and are prone to unconventional and highly unpredictable actions. Moreover, the erosion of the existing world order, continuous breaches and unaddressed violations of international law and the ongoing conflicts in different parts of the globe continue to weaken as a whole the security architecture on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials.

With a view to tackling the growing threat of WMD proliferation globally, we support initiatives aimed at further strengthening the role and potential of resolution 1540 (2004) for a long-term perspective, such as the recent establishment of the 1540 Group of Friends, which we fully support. Ukraine welcomes the constructive and results-oriented approach of the Spanish chairmanship in the process of the comprehensive review of the resolution's implementation, to be concluded by December. It is important that the process also focus on ways to ensure that the relevant international legal norms are fully respected and implemented by all Member States.

Ukraine stands ready to engage constructively with all like-minded partners on those crucial matters.

To conclude my intervention, I would like to reiterate that, while terrorism and the risk of WMD proliferation by non-State actors continue to pose a serious threat to international peace and security, there is a persistent need to ensure close and effective cooperation and coordination between the relevant subsidiary bodies of the Security Council, in particular in the outreach activities and country visits conducted within their respective mandates, as well as in the exchange of information.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7687

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7687th meeting
Wednesday, 4 May 2016, 2 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Aboulatta	(Egypt)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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16-12629 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 2.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs; and Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: The Council has requested the Department of Political Affairs to brief it on the political and security implications of the recent developments in Aleppo. At the outset, I wish to emphasize what the Secretary-General said to the Council yesterday (see S/PV.7685). The pattern of systematic destruction is evident in Aleppo. No corner of the city has been spared. Aleppo is increasingly becoming a shell of what it once was. Government aerial bombardment of the city over the past two weeks represents some of the worst of the war. Opposition shelling of Government-controlled neighbourhoods has also led to death and destruction. There is a clear danger that those attacks and counter-attacks will continue to escalate and even spread beyond Aleppo. We take note of the statement just issued by the United States Department of State that the United States and Russia concluded arrangements late yesterday to extend the nationwide cessation of hostilities to Aleppo, and we urge the parties to abide by that immediately and comprehensively.

The Council will hear shortly from Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien on the humanitarian dimensions of the recent developments in Aleppo. But let me be clear — denying people access to essential humanitarian relief is a serious violation of international humanitarian law. Using starvation as a weapon during conflict is a war crime. No cause can justify the toll in civilian lives that we continue to see around the country every day. All State and non-State parties to conflict are bound by a strict obligation to comply with the rules of international humanitarian law. I remind Council members of the Secretary-General's call for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court. Those responsible for war crimes must be held to account.

Unfortunately, ever more shocking reports have been received from the city of Aleppo over the past two weeks. We have all seen the horrifying images of attacks on hospitals in both Government- and opposition-held neighbourhoods of the city. Let me once again be absolutely clear: intentional and direct attacks on hospitals are war crimes. Indiscriminate attacks on civilian neighbourhoods in Aleppo have also continued. Both Government and opposition forces have reportedly made attempts to achieve territorial advances in recent weeks. Finally, reports of joint military operations being conducted both by groups that are parties to the cessation of hostilities and by those outside it, such as the Al-Nusra Front, present a major challenge to stabilizing the situation.

The overall situation in Aleppo increasingly resembles some of the worst days of the period before the cessation of hostilities. As I mentioned, we understand that the United States and Russia concluded arrangements for a day of silence in Aleppo and its surroundings, starting last night at one minute after midnight Damascus time, but its implementation has proved challenging, even as it has led to an overall decrease in violence. Consolidating and extending that agreement would be an important step in the right direction. We also hope that the arrangements of days of silence announced earlier for parts of Damascus and rural Latakia will also be consolidated, and we welcome the news that the silence has been extended to the eastern Ghouta suburb of Damascus for the next 48 hours.

We must put the cessation of hostilities back on track throughout the country, and all should do their fair share in that regard. Moving forward, additional measures will also be needed to reinvigorate and ensure enhanced monitoring of the cessation of hostilities. In that regard, Special Envoy de Mistura held consultations over the past two days with the co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group ceasefire task force and is in Berlin today to meet with German and French officials. He also met separately with the

head of the opposition's high negotiations committee. I welcome the co-Chairs' decision to deploy additional staff to Geneva to increase oversight of the cessation of hostilities.

Turning now to the political process, Special Envoy De Mistura was clear in his briefing to the Security Council on 27 April: in order to be credible, the next round of negotiations should be supported by tangible progress on the ground in terms of a consolidated cessation of hostilities and increased humanitarian access. The Special Envoy intends to reconvene intra-Syrian negotiations later in May, but doing so without progress in those two areas runs a real risk of becoming a failed political process. In particular, the current levels of violence in Aleppo are having a negative effect on the Syrian parties' ability to engage in negotiations.

The Secretary-General has repeatedly said that there is no military solution to this conflict. The basic fact remains that the only way for peace to come to Syria is through a political solution based on a credible political transition that emerges from intra-Syrian negotiations. With that in mind, during the round of negotiations held from 13 to 27 April, Special Envoy De Mistura developed a mediator's summary that identified 18 points that are necessary if political transition arrangements are to move forward.

During that last round of negotiations, progress was made in the sense that all participants, including the Syrian Government, accepted that a Syrian-led transition is necessary in order to end the conflict. In future rounds, we will have to determine how the respective visions of a political transition that have been put forward conform to the requirements of resolution 2254 (2015) for credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance; of the resolution's endorsement of the Vienna statements in pursuit of full implementation of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex); and of its reiteration that a sustainable solution to the current crisis in Syria must include, among other things, the establishment of an inclusive transitional governing body with full executive powers, which shall be formed on the basis of mutual consent while ensuring the continuity of governmental institutions.

In resolution 2254 (2015), the Vienna statements and the Geneva communiqué, the international community has already defined a number of core principles for any transition. Chief among them for ensuring a credible transition is the requirement set out in the Geneva communiqué for all Government institutions, including the security and intelligence services, to perform in accordance with human rights and professional standards and to operate under a leadership that inspires public confidence, under the control of the transitional governing body. We are at a point where the renewed backing of the International Syria Support Group is required to take forward the intra-Syrian negotiations on a political transition process, based on full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué.

As per resolution 2253 (2015) and numerous other Council resolutions, combating terrorism is a top priority. The need to tackle that issue, however, should not prevent us from advancing serious negotiations on a political transition. Now that terrorism is being addressed on a separate, credible and parallel international track, it should not hinder progress on the political transition process. Let us also be clear that there can be no place for terrorism, in Syria or anywhere else. Through the political process, one of the greatest contributions we can make to fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Al-Nusra Front and their ideology is by achieving a comprehensive political transition to an inclusive, democratic and participatory State.

In accordance with resolution 2254 (2015), the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy are trying to arrive at an agreed way forward by August. We cannot waste the opportunity provided by the negotiations in Geneva. It would be a mistake to allow the parties to the conflict to play for time or territory on the ground so as to strengthen their positions at the negotiating table. The United Nations will strive to resume the negotiations as soon as feasible, in the hope that, in the meantime, the efforts to put the cessation of hostilities back on track, including in Aleppo, will bear fruit.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing. I echo his call and that of so many others for an end to the carnage in Aleppo, and in Syria generally. For the sake of the people of Aleppo, Syria and beyond, we cannot squander the opportunity provided by the negotiations in Geneva. I am glad to note the news that have just been

received, as announced by Mr. Feltman, of a further agreement and hope that it can be implemented in full.

But I am horrified by the continued death and destruction in Aleppo. Over the past 10 days, indiscriminate attacks and the use of explosive weapons in populated areas by Government forces, non-State armed groups and listed terrorist groups has intensified, mostly affecting innocent civilians. While the dead are still being counted and while medical personnel are trying to save lives and tend to the injured, we can already estimate that hundreds of civilians have been killed or injured, including dozens of women and children.

Life for people in Aleppo is horrendous and has lost all sense. Access to basic and essential services such as water and electricity is sporadic at best. People are living under daily threat and terror. Those who remain in eastern Aleppo, roughly 300,000 people, live in constant fear of the next attack from the air, including from barrel bombs. School activities for thousands of children have been suspended, and Friday prayers have been cancelled. The estimated 1.3 million people living in western Aleppo city are crowding into basements, seeking refuge from volleys of shells and mortar rounds, which continue to slam into what is left of their homes, as people and humanitarian workers are pinned down in their respective factional quarters in the city. There can be no explanation or excuse, no reason or rationale for waging war on civilians.

I am going to focus again on the inexcusable, deeply disturbing attacks on medical facilities. We have all seen the harrowing images of bombs and mortars raining down on medical facilities and medical personnel across Aleppo in recent days. On 22 April, an air strike hit an ambulance en route to assist people wounded in an earlier air strike in the Al-Huluk neighbourhood of eastern Aleppo, killing the driver and the paramedic. On 27 April, Al-Quds hospital, the most advanced paediatric care centre in Aleppo — let me repeat, a hospital dedicated to treating children — was destroyed after being hit by a wave of air strikes, which by all accounts had been launched by the Government of Syria. Fifty people were killed, including several doctors, and eighty more people were injured. On 29 April, air strikes destroyed a United Nations-funded primary health centre in the Marjeh Square neighbourhood and the Boustan Al-Qasir health-care centre in eastern Aleppo, which are both currently controlled by non-State armed groups, injuring several people and putting the facilities out of service. In western Aleppo, currently controlled by the Government, Ibn Rushd hospital was hit by mortars, allegedly fired by non-State armed groups last week, and just yesterday an attack on the Al-Dabeet maternity hospital, in western Aleppo, again allegedly by non-State armed groups, resulted in three fatalities, injuring fifteen more. Those terrible attacks have not only claimed innocent lives, but have also had a multiplier effect, leaving tens of thousands of civilians unable to obtain even the most basic levels of care, even as fighting intensifies around them.

More broadly, according to Physicians for Human Rights, there have been over 360 documented attacks on some 250 medical facilities during the course of the conflict. More than 730 medical personnel have been killed. Hospitals dedicated to treating children and those serving pregnant women are no longer places where civilians can safely go for treatment. And it is now considered a risk, as I said in my previous statement to the Council (see S/PV.7682), to live near a medical facility.

Clearly enshrined in international humanitarian law and as the Council reconfirmed yesterday (see S/PV.7685), the protection and provision of medical assistance and health care to the wounded and sick is at the heart of humanitarian action. Whoever they are and whatever side of the fight they are on, those responsible for such repeated, unconscionable acts of inhumanity must understand that their acts cannot and will not be forgotten. Such attacks against civilians are violations of international humanitarian law. Some of them amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Those who are responsible must know that they will one day be held accountable,

I want to pay tribute to the tireless efforts of humanitarian actors and first-responders, most of whom are Syrian, who continue to risk their lives to stay and deliver assistance in Aleppo and across the country. So far this year, the United Nations and partners have delivered life-saving aid to hundreds of thousands of people per month in Aleppo city, originating both from within Syria and from across the border in Turkey.

However, we remain extremely concerned about how the security situation in Aleppo city is impeding humanitarian access and operations. Already, in the past few days, many humanitarian actors have had to suspend their operations, unable to reach tens of

thousands of children, who could not be vaccinated last week. We are dismayed that the Government of Syria did not approve our request for a cross-line inter-agency convoy to eastern Aleppo city in May. The suspension of the activities of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent in the east of the city over the past weeks is also a worrying development, as that organization is a key partner of the United Nations in Syria, and we call on all concerned to allow it to resume its activities in eastern Aleppo city as soon as possible. In fact, now, there is not a moment to lose.

We are reporting today on Aleppo, but make no mistake, indiscriminate attacks and the destruction of civilian infrastructure continue to inflict tremendous suffering on Syrians across the country. We are very concerned about the escalation of violence and the impact on civilians in other parts of the country; for example, in Dar'a, where there have been reports of heavy fighting between Government forces and non-State armed groups, including shelling and aerial bombardment over the past week.

The bottom line is that attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure need to stop immediately. There also needs to be full, unhindered, unconditional, safe and sustained access to all people in need, including in besieged and hard-to-reach areas, access for all types of assistance, including medical and surgical supplies. In short, all parties must finally and unequivocally live up to their obligations under international humanitarian law and the demands of the Council's resolutions.

My question to Council members today is again: how many more deaths, how much more suffering can we tolerate before there is a collective push towards an end to this senseless and shameful crisis affecting Syrians, their neighbours and many more people beyond?

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, for responding rapidly to my request for an urgent meeting. I welcome the briefings by Under-Secretary-General Feltman and Under-Secretary-General O'Brien, and I welcome the fact that this is a public meeting of the Security Council.

Aleppo has been Syria's cultural capital for centuries, but in this conflict it has become a very different symbol, one of oppression and brutality, a symbol of Al-Assad's willingness to fight to the last breath, even if it means the very destruction of Syria itself. One need only glance at media reports from yesterday. At 11 a.m. local time, two barrel bombs fell on the Al-Huluk neighbourhood of Aleppo city. Four people were killed. Just after midday, regime shelling hit at least seven neighbourhoods. A couple of hours later, at 2.30 p.m., rockets hit the Al-Shaher neighbourhood. I could go on, but I think the point is clear: the cessation of hostilities has effectively ceased to exist in Aleppo. The city is burning; people are dying. In little over a week last month, 253 people were killed in Aleppo, 80 of them were women and children. As Dr. Abo El Ezz put it so painfully, "we are running out of coffins to bury our friends, family and colleagues".

The cessation of hostilities was supposed to be one of the three pillars of Special Envoy De Mistura's political settlement in Syria, but like the hospitals and houses of Aleppo, that pillar has been systematically attacked and degraded by the actions of the Al-Assad regime. Any trace of optimism from resolution 2268 (2016) has all but evaporated.

Through his actions, Al-Assad has shown that he has no commitment to a political settlement, no commitment to bringing peace to Syria. It has never been clearer: there can be no peace while he remains in power. How can he play a role in the future when he orders his forces to impede access to humanitarian aid in complete disregard of so many of our resolutions; when he wilfully denies those most in need of the very supplies that could save their lives; when he deliberately attacks hospitals, as we heard so painfully yesterday?

Al-Assad and his allies will point tc the threat of the terrorist group Jabhat al-Nusra in Aleppo. They will claim that their actions are in defence of the Syrian people. But how, under any circumstances, can the assault and encirclement of an entire city be justified? How can the shelling of hospitals and schools be justified? Those attacks amount to nothing more than barbaric collective punishment. They are war crimes. I agree with the Secretary-General: those responsible should be held fully accountable, including by the International Criminal Court.

The Council has an obligation to the people of Aleppo. We have an obligation to show that we are working for their protection, that we are trying to find that elusive political settlement that will end this war. What confidence can a man, woman or child in

Aleppo have in our words today? What faith can they place in any future cessation of hostilities when they have seen this one abused so violently? The only way to build back confidence, to restore that faith, is to stop the violence. We owe it to the people of Aleppo to be clear and candid about the efforts to stop those attacks. Without such clarity, how can they believe that a cessation of hostilities will not be used as cover for further military advances?

I therefore welcome the recent announcement about the agreement between the United States and Russia reaffirming the cessation of hostilities in Aleppo, Latakia and eastern Ghouta. But we must now see an immediate, positive response to that latest development. Only its full implementation will give the people of Syria that much needed clarity for actions speak louder than words.

To support that effort, the United Kingdom is today proposing a Security Council statement that condemns the violence in Aleppo and calls for an urgent end to the brutality. We owe it to the people of Aleppo, the living and the dead, to show that the Council can speak with one voice on that issue and that we can work together to bring this violence to an end. We cannot choose to do nothing in the face of such barbarity. To do so would be tantamount to collusion with the very forces destroying Aleppo.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Egyptian presidency of the Security Council for bringing us together today for this public debate on the situation in Syria, and more specifically in Aleppo. France took the initiative with the United Kingdom to call for this meeting. I also thank Mr. Feltman and Mr. O'Brien for their briefings.

The diplomatic process that was initiated in Vienna raised hopes when it ended on 27 February with the entry into force of a cessation of hostilities across the entire Syrian territory. France voted in favour of resolution 2268 (2016) and welcomed the agreement as a contribution to de-escalation and as an opportunity for Syrians to finally see the diplomatic process lead to a reduction in violence and an improvement in the situation for civilians. For almost a month, the cessation of hostilities helped the population enjoy an improvement that had not been seen since the conflict began five years ago, even if humanitarian progress has never yet met their expectations.

Since last month we are seeing that the fragile vessel of the cessation of hostilities is full of holes and today threatens to sink. Let us not mince words. The Damascus regime is the main party responsible and the new offensive launched by the regime on Aleppo city on 22 April is a flagrant and tragic example of that. In many respects, Aleppo is to Syria what Sarajevo was to Bosnia — a symbol, a crossroads, a martyr. Aleppo — a symbolic city that is thousands of years old and considered to be part of the world cultural heritage — is a crossroads where so many civilizations have clashed and merged, leaving a deep and diverse imprint. The city is now suffering martyrdom. That bastion of the moderate opposition has for four years resisted the continual assaults of Bashar Al-Assad's regime and of Da'esh.

We cannot turn a blind eye on those who seek to seize Aleppo by using the cessation of hostilities agreement as a smokescreen. That is all the more true because in its offensive against Aleppo the regime is using all means possible, including deliberate attacks on civilians. We are now seeing the consequences of that. The resumption of fighting has left over 280 dead in just a few days and caused a new flow of displaced persons to the Turkish border. The use of barrel bombs on populated residential areas, the very purpose of which is to spread terror among the population, has resumed. France has repeatedly denounced such acts.

Although the Security Council yesterday unanimously adopted resolution 2286 (2016) to protect medical personnel and facilities, the regime is deliberately, systematically and methodically targeting them. On 25 April, five White Helmets were killed after their centre at Al-Atareb, near Aleppo, was deliberately attacked. On 27 April, the Al-Quds hospital was deliberately bombed by the regime, with a raft of casualties. On 29 April, the Al-Marjeh health-care centre in Aleppo was completely destroyed. The regime of Bashar Al-Assad bears the full responsibility for the breakdown in the ceasefire in Aleppo. Faced with this spiral of violence, France and the United Kingdom felt duty-bound to call on the Security Council to convene this meeting.

At this very hour, the fragile agreement between the Russians and Americans that just entered into force is an encouraging sign, but it needs to be confirmed and then translated into facts on the ground. To restore the ceasefire across the entire Syrian territory and maintain the political momentum, we must do a great

deal more to ensure the cessation of hostilities is effectively respected. Otherwise, we will see a return to the horror and the resumption of clashes that, let us not forget, have led to over 400,000 deaths and millions of refugees and destroyed an entire country.

France believes that the Security Council has an important role to play in monitoring the observance of the ceasefire and to punish the most serious violations by mining the information to be relayed on a monthly basis by the Geneva task force, as requested under resolution 2268 (2016). In the meantime, the supporters of the regime must shoulder their responsibilities and use their influence on Damascus to ensure that the weapons are effectively silenced, because too often the regime pays lip service to an agreement only so as to violate it more thoroughly.

Last week, Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura alerted us collectively, stressing that the cessation of hostilities was in danger. We are convinced that a collective mobilization is necessary to respond urgently to that warning. For its part, France will spare no effort in that regard, on the basis of three major axes in particular.

After this meeting, we hope that the Council will be able to send a clear message on the need to end the fighting in Aleppo and to strengthen the cessation of hostilities. That will require nothing less than ensuring compliance with resolution 2268 (2016), which was adopted unanimously as a joint proposal of Russia and the United States. We must also continue to mobilize the international community to bring pressure to bear on the regime and to seek to rebuild positive momentum. It is in that spirit that the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, Mr. Jean-Marc Ayrault, and his German counterpart met today with Special Envoy De Mistura and the head of the moderate opposition, Riad Hijab.

Finally, as Staffan de Mistura did before this Council last week, France has been requesting for several days now that we organize, in short order, a ministerial meeting of the International Syria Support Group with three objectives in mind: first, to secure a more robust guarantee of respect for the ceasefire; secondly, to reaffirm the need to protect and provide assistance to civilian populations; and thirdly, to resume negotiations with a view to finding a political solution.

Ultimately, a single lodestar should guide us — to do everything to end the violence, in Aleppo and throughout Syria, and enable the resumption of negotiations aimed at implementing resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/523, annex). There is no other alternative if we are to put an end to the Syrian tragedy.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the United Kingdom for having requested this urgent meeting of the Security Council.

Just yesterday, here in the Chamber, the President of Médecins Sans Frontières, who was seated exactly where the Syrian delegation is seated, stated that more than 300 attacks had occurred in Aleppo over the past few days, with hundreds of civilian deaths and the destruction of six medical facilities (see S/PV.7685). Last week in a closed meeting, we said what today we would like to repeat openly, with more urgency if necessary: we need to rectify the situation in Syria immediately, along the three tracks in this conflict, namely, the cessation of hostilities, the political negotiations and the desperate humanitarian situation. The Security Council must support the work of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, through bilateral efforts with the parties and through a statement on the three issues that I just mentioned. As the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General said, the priority now is the cessation of hostilities. All the parties to the conflict must urgently comply with the parameters established by resolution 2268 (2016). The next step must be a return to the negotiating table in order to take up the political transition in Syria once and for all.

The most recent attack on a hospital took place yesterday, launched by the opposition forces. That is in addition to other attacks committed by Government forces. All of them were of enormous seriousness. We demand once again that all the parties to the conflict, in particular the Government of Al-Assad, to respect international humanitarian law in the conduct of hostilities.

Mr. O'Brien said in closed consultations — and yesterday the President of Médecins Sans Frontières repeated it — that in Aleppo it is dangerous to live next to a hospital. Mr. O'Brien once again reminded us of that today. It is unbelievable that it is often more dangerous to be a doctor, a patient or a family member visiting a patient than it is to be a combatant.

Aleppo is the first opportunity to demonstrate that we take resolution 2268 (2016) seriously. As I said yesterday, our threshold of tolerance in the face of attacks against medical facilities and medical workers

should be zero. We want the medical workers and patients that still survive in Aleppo to be the first to see some kind of outcome from this resolution.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. I would also like to thank the United Kingdom for calling today's important meeting.

The city known today as Aleppo has been continuously inhabited for more than 7,000 years. Over the centuries, it has been won and lost by a succession of empires — the Greeks, the Romans, crusaders, the Ottomans and more. It has been home to diverse populations of traders and merchants, which included Muslims, Jews and Christians. That is not ancient history. Those influences have long been visible in the city's architecture, tasted in its food and felt in its culture. By the sixteenth century, it was famous enough for Shakespeare to cite it in *Othello* and *Macbeth*.

A city does not become one of the world's oldest without surviving great challenges. Aleppo has endured wars, occupations and earthquakes. In 1260 it survived a siege by the Mongols. After so many centuries, a city like this might seem able to survive anything. But in recent days, young Syrians have spread a slogan across social media: "Aleppo is burning". After five years of war, the recent explosion of violence has threatened what remains of the city. Just today, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, warned that continued violence could be catastrophic and that it could force 400,000 more residents to flee. Imagine the ripple effect and the consequences of that additional displacement.

To save Aleppo — what is left of Aleppo — we need progress on the same three fronts needed for peace in Syria overall. It is not that complicated. As Special Envoy De Mistura previously underscored, the three elements are stopping the fighting, improving humanitarian access and engaging in political negotiations to bring about transition. This year has actually shown that all three are possible — however belatedly, unevenly and imperfectly implemented — when there is political will. The cessation of hostilities has, up to this point, saved lives. Humanitarian access, while still grotesquely restricted, has improved modestly. And Special Envoy de Mistura has convened the parties for talks in Geneva. All three tracks are interlinked and interdependent and we cannot, as some have argued, neglect any one of them and expect the other two to succeed.

In recent days, as evidenced most clearly by what has occurred in Aleppo, all three of those tracks are in grave peril. First, as others have noted, across much of Aleppo, the cessation of hostilities has given way to horrific violence. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that more than 270 civilians were killed in Aleppo just since 22 April. While all sides have contributed to the violence, the military escalation was attributable largely to the actions of a single party — the Al-Assad regime. The regime launched more than 300 air strikes, 110 artillery strikes and 18 missiles, and dropped more than 68 bombs on the city over just these past two weeks, according to credible actors on the ground. All of that while still paying lip service to a cessation of hostilities. Against that backdrop, the United States has been working urgently with Special Envoy De Mistura and with the Russian Federation to reaffirm the cessation across the country. Through those efforts, the parties to the cessation agreed to recommit to the truce in Aleppo and its suburbs earlier today. The city has been calmer, and we urge all parties to comply fully so that hostilities actually cease — not just in Aleppo but across the country.

The regime and some of its supporters sometimes claim to be attacking the Al-Nusra Front or Da'esh, but the sites hit in Aleppo show otherwise. Consider this list of targets struck by the regime or its allies between 20 and 29 April — not ancient history, but rather a matter of the past couple of weeks. This list of targets was provided by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, which has proved highly reliable during the conflict: an ambulance in the Bab Al-Nairab neighbourhood, a public market in the district of Al-Sakhour, a civil defence centre in Al-Atarib, a bakery in Al-Ameriyeh, a school in the Bab Al-Hadid district and a mosque in the Al-Sukkari district. The distinction between civilians and military personnel and targets has to be respected in accordance with international law. Yet every day the photos and videos out of Aleppo show that that distinction has been obliterated.

It is important to note that violence by the Al-Nusra Front or Da'esh is violence by groups that are not a party to the cessation and are not protected by the cessation of hostilities. The rest of the opposition that signed up for the cessation and abided by it cannot be held responsible for the actions of terrorists who have

made no secret of their desire to keep fighting. Nobody benefits more from this war, and from the failure to reach a political solution and a political transition, than the terrorists. However, one cannot lump the like with the unlike, the innocent with the guilty.

These attacks have imposed an incalculable toll on Aleppo's civilians, and they contribute to a devastating humanitarian situation in the city. But the regime has also taken additional measures that show its overt intent to ratchet up civilian suffering in Aleppo. The Syrian Government has restricted humanitarian access and blocked aid, thereby undercutting that second element necessary for a peaceful resolution to be advanced. The International Syria Support Group (ISSG) has just been informed, as Under-Secretary-General O'Brien has just confirmed here today, that the regime has approved only eight deliveries for 25 per cent of people in the United Nations May delivery plan for besieged and hard-to-reach areas, and the Syrian Government did not approve any of the Aleppo locations in the United Nations May plan. Is that a coincidence or is it simply in keeping with the regime's massive offensive designed to terrorize the people of Aleppo?

Though the Council should need no reminder, resolution 2254 (2015) calls for rapid, safe and unhindered access throughout the country. Aleppo is a place of huge need right now. We often focus in our remarks on those who have been killed, but think of all of those who have been injured and are in desperate need of help. Resolution 2254 (2015) proscribes the removal of medicines and medical supplies from aid conveys, but, again, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has documented that that is a routine practice throughout Syria. It is the exception when medical supplies are actually allowed through on convoys. It is a rule, and a rule that is enforced across the board by the Syrian Government's bureaucracy, to remove medical supplies from convoys.

Just to give one example, on a recent convoy to Rastan, the authorities even went so far as to remove the scissors and anaesthetics from midwifery kits. Who does that? Let us be honest. The people who do that are people who do not give a damn what the Council prescribes. They do not care. They have stopped listening.

At the same time, the regime has deliberately targeted first-responders, health-care workers and medical facilities. Of the 33 hospitals open in Aleppo in 2010, fewer than 10 are reportedly functioning today. The most recent example, as we all know, was the loss of the Al-Quds hospital, which suffered a horrific attack that killed at least 50 civilians, including the city's last pediatrician, Dr. Muhammad Waseem Moaz, a man described by a colleague as the loveliest doctor in their hospital. He was a man who had sent his family to safety in Turkey, while he stayed behind to treat his patients. He was a man so committed to his people that he often slept in the hospital in case a child needed emergency help during the night.

According to Physicians for Human Rights, the attack that killed that great doctor along with so many others was actually the third strike on the hospital since the war began. That is not an accident. If you hit a hospital once by mistake, you can adjust your targeting and make allowances, but that was wilful targeting. At least six medical facilities throughout Aleppo were attacked during the past week, and the most recent attack, as we have heard, was yesterday against the Dabbit maternity clinic in regime-held territory where more civilians were killed. All of those attacks are reprehensible. Just yesterday, the Council adopted resolution 2286 (2016) on, inter alia, the importance of the protection of medical personnel and the importance of access to medical care in armed conflict. Every member of the Council voted in favour, and it is now time to call for its implementation in a real context — the context of Syria. And that means urgently pressing the regime and any group that would shell a hospital to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and cease targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and medical personnel.

That brings me to the third and final element necessary for progress towards the conflict's resolution: political negotiations aimed at political transition. After five years of war, it should be abundantly clear that the conflict will be settled only through political dialogue. Aleppo is a living monument to the belief that military force can achieve something for the people of Syria. The need for a political solution is precisely what the Council agreed in December 2015 when we adopted resolution 2254 (2015). Yet we have seen one party in particular renege on its commitments to a full cessation of hostilities nation-wide and to the full, rapid and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid, blatantly disregarding resolution 2254 (2015). That undermines the conditions needed for negotiations and makes

finding common ground and forging compromises exceedingly difficult.

Let me conclude. There is plenty of blame to go around for the worsening situation in Aleppo, but there can be no doubt about where the primary responsibility lies. It lies with the same regime that is responsible for committing similar offenses throughout the country: the one that has laid siege to 15 cities throughout Syria and restricted access to aid for millions of Syrians, leading to the preventable deaths of countless civilians; the one responsible for 12 of the 13 attacks on medical facilities, recorded from January through March by Physicians for Human Rights, and 24 of the 25 deaths that resulted from those strikes; the regime responsible for last week's air strikes against a Syrian civil-defence station in the town of Al-Atareb in Aleppo Province, which killed five brave men who volunteered to serve their communities as first-responders: Ahmad Abdullah, Khaled Bashar, Ahmad Mahmoud, Hamdo Haj Ibrahim and Hussain Ismail — the most recent casualties among the more than 115 white helmets, who have died in the line of duty since the war began; and the same party and the same regime responsible for the vast majority of the 400,000 deaths — and counting — in the conflict.

The party primarily responsible for the burning in Aleppo is a United Nations Member State. That should revolt us. The party is a United Nations Member State indifferent and cold to the ghastly suffering of its people. That should galvanize and unite us. All those with influence, particularly Russia and Iran, must press the regime to meet its commitments and obligations. For our part, the United States will continue pressing the opposition to do the same. We will work with our Russian counterparts to try to restore a real and lasting cessation of hostilities in Aleppo and elsewhere in Syria and facilitate a political transition away from Al-Assad — the only way in which this war will finally end. The entire ISSG is going to have to be a part of making that happen.

Today, a Syrian surgeon in Aleppo, Dr. Osama Abo El Ezz, wrote in the *New York Times* of losing so many of his close friends who were medical professionals over the last five years. Over the past week, he wrote, "The bombardment has reached such ferocity that even the stones are catching fire". Of the cessation of hostilities, he wrote,

> "Imperfect though it was, it offered Syrian civilians a brief respite from five years of violence. People had begun to recover during the truce, to get their lives back."

He continued to recount that now, people in Aleppo are waiting for death and even praying for it in some instances to take them away from "this burning city", as he put it. All of us here must work relentlessly to restore and maintain the respite from violence, for which Syrians yearn and which they deserve, to ensure that they receive vital humanitarian aid to survive — many are on death's door right now as we sit here — and to build the political solution, which is the only escape from the daily inferno.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Jeffrey Feltman and Stephen O'Brien for their briefings.

As a result of the cessation of hostilities, which was put in place thanks to the leading role of the Russian Federation and the United States and confirmed in resolution 2268 (2016), the level of violence in Syria has significantly decreased. That move was a real breakthrough in the protracted conflict. New prospects for a peaceful resolution have opened up, and the Syrians have to decide for themselves the parameters of that peaceful resolution with the support of the United Nations.

Overall, the two rounds of negotiations went very well. However, not all of the opposition forces showed a willingness to reach an agreement. Once again, a separate position was adopted by the Riyadh group, which still has not formulated a clear position. In many parts of Syria the truce has been observed. Numerous armed units and towns are joining the truce, thanks to the efforts of the Syria Reconciliation Centre opened by Russia in Hmeymim. Today, there are 90 such towns covered by the truce. At the same time, hundreds of meetings with the city elders, field commanders and representatives of local administrations have been carried out. And in a number of provinces, peaceful life is slowly returning.

We should not question the radical improvement of the situation resulting from the implementation of the cessation of hostilities, which has, however, spurred on others who are interested in perpetuating the Syrian conflict. We also believe that it is counter-productive to express public criticism about unverified incidents simply to add new charges against the Syrian Government. That has occurred more than once. The deterioration in certain areas of Syria, including Aleppo,

is a serious source of concern. Government forces are fighting off a large-scale offensive by the jihadists. In the past few days, we have seen a significant increase in shelling from the parts of the city controlled by jihadists. So-called hell's cannons are being used — gas canisters packed with tiny metal fragments, which have a devastating effect. Those weapons are by definition indiscriminate and are meant to destroy and terrorize the civilian population.

We were long promised that the armed units of the so-called moderate opposition would break off all links with Al-Nusra, withdraw from the territories they occupy and clearly state their readiness to take part in the peace settlement. That has not occurred so far, which raises the question of whether the political will exists among those who have an influence on the various players. We are beginning to get the impression that external sponsors cannot or do not want to influence the Syrian opposition groups in order to force them to distance themselves from the terrorists.

Russia and the United States of America, as co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group, are ready to continue working together to ensure de-escalation. At least that is how we would like to see the situation to evolve. Russian and American military experts are working together on a daily basis. As we speak, a joint centre for rapid response to breaches of the cessation of hostilities has begun to operate on a permanent basis in Geneva, maximizing the effective monitoring of the situation. It must be said say that, from the very beginning of our increased participation in the Syrian situation in October, Russia has proposed such cooperation to the United States. Unfortunately, it has taken more than six months to achieve it, but we hope that this will be an important step in our efforts to stop the bloodshed in Syria.

Thanks to the efforts in the military and political spheres, calm has been restored in Latakia and eastern Ghouta, with the aim of making it permanent. Russia and the United States, with the agreement of the Government of Syria and the moderate opposition, hoped to introduce a regime of calm in Aleppo on 3 May. However, that planned timetable was derailed by attacks by terrorist groups. That day, the insurgents sought to break the defences through coordinated offences from the west, preceded by a massive artillery bombardment. Jabhat Al-Nusra, Ahrar ash-Sham, Jaish al-Islam, Harakat Nour al-Din al-Zenki and local criminal groups took part in the offensive. All those groups shelled residential areas the whole day long; in particular, the Martyrs of Badr Brigade claimed responsibility for the destruction of Al-Dabit maternity hospital. Over the past 24 hours, dozens of people were killed and hundreds were wounded.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, Jabhat Al-Nusra and other terrorist groups are excluded from the cessation of hostilities regime. It is unacceptable to pause in the fight with terrorists so as to allow them to regroup. No one will spare the terrorists and those who are in breach of the cessation of hostilities required United Nations resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016).

We would add that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has genuine evidence of the use of mustard gas in Syria, and thee are serious grounds to believe that war gases are being used by terrorists. There is an alarming risk that they have the capacity to produce toxic substances, as recently confirmed by the Director-General of the OPCW. It is unfortunate that, just when we need to take all necessary steps to impede the activities of chemical terrorists, some Western members of the Council, under contrived pretexts, are stifling the Russian-Chinese initiative aimed at neutralizing the threat of the production of chemical weapons by terrorists in and around Syria.

We need to pursue our very serious work on the issue of the Syrian peace settlement and support for Russian-American efforts. Let us speak clearly — we need to put an end to all provocations once and for. It is clear that without external support for terrorist groups in Syria, they could not operate on such a scale. We need help in cutting off supplies to terrorists, first and foremost across the Syrian-Turkish border. Parties under patronage should be compelled to come to the negotiating table, which will contribute to ensuring peace in Syria. I would like to repeat in a slightly different form a rhetorical question posed by one speaker: How could you allow the destruction of an ancient country in a prolonged, bloody conflict to achieve the geopolitical aims of one party or its partners?

We hope that the Geneva talks will resume in May and lead the way to further negotiations. We call on all sides to participate constructively in dialogue and to refrain from threats or sabotage. As for the press statement proposed by the United Kingdom, we will of course consider it, but we would have viewed it as a truly serious attempt to urge the Security Council

to contribute to the maintenance of the cessation of hostilities if the delegation of the United Kingdom had consulted with the co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group, Russia and the United States, which are spearheading the ceasefire efforts. As I see it now, it is more of a propaganda gesture. However, we will take a look at the text and consult with our military colleagues, who, alongside our American colleagues, are doing relevant work in Geneva.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): We too wish to thank the United Kingdom for convening today's meeting. We think it is very timely to have an open discussion in the Chamber about the situation in Syria, and in particular the situation in Aleppo.

New Zealand has been deeply concerned about the violence in Aleppo and elsewhere in Syria. We continue to be shocked at the apparent indifference of the parties to the war and all of their backers to the appalling suffering of the Syrian people. The escalation of violence in and around Aleppo shows that the parties have been continuing to pursue their objectives by military means. And yet, as we have said so many times in the Chamber and in the adjacent consultation room, there can be no military solution to the conflict. We welcome the news that it has been agreed between the United States and the Russian Federation to extend the cessation of hostilities to Aleppo, Latakia and eastern Ghouta. But if peace is to have any chance, there must be a full re-establishment of the cessation of hostilities to all of Syria and a genuine recommitment to the peace process.

All sides must invest fully in the political process. That means respecting international humanitarian law. It means respecting the Council's resolutions, and it means prioritizing the welfare of the Syrian people over narrow political and military aims. The current political process, established at the end of 2015 under resolution 2268 (2015), represents the best chance we have had in five years to end this awful war. We cannot afford to miss that opportunity. We all have a responsibility to support the talks, to support the Special Envoy and to pressure the parties at the negotiating table to participate in good faith.

In our view, good faith means increasing access for humanitarian aid, negotiating the release of detainees, stopping the fighting and engaging on the substance of a political transition. It also means stopping attacks on schools and hospitals and allowing medical supplies to be delivered in humanitarian convoys. Just yesterday, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2286 (2016), reminding combatants of the rules of armed conflict, demanding protection for those who provide health care, and demanding accountability for those who flout those rules. Most of all, good faith in this context means adhering to the spirit of the cessation of hostilities, which means stopping the fighting and attempts to grab land.

What has happened in Aleppo in the past few days was all too predictable, as we heard reports over the past two weeks from United Nations representatives. While we have understood that there have been efforts to battle Al-Nusra, it is hard not to conclude that what has happened has all been part of an elaborate plan to seize Syria's second-largest city before the peace talks got seriously under way.

New Zealand is fully committed to international efforts to combat terrorism. As we have said in the Council Chamber and in the adjacent room, this should be an issue that unites us, but it has not been, and there has been a growing tendency to use the words "terrorism" and "terrorists" loosely in justification for any military response. That must stop. Any military action needs to be carried out with full respect for international humanitarian law. This of course means avoiding attacks on civilians and civilian targets. The requirements of distinction and proportionality and the prohibition on indiscriminate attacks must be respected, even when fighting terrorists. If the cessation of hostilities and the peace process are to have any chance of succeeding, greater care is required to distinguish between those groups that are participants in the peace process and those that are outside it, and greater weight given to the overall political need to advance the peace process.

The talks that have been under way between the United States and Russia, in coordination with the Special Envoy and others in the region, are the best chance we have in the short term to make progress and to see an end to fighting, particularly in and around Aleppo. We welcome those talks, we welcome the recent announcement, and we look forward to further progress in such areas as further geographical delineation and other measures to help restore and sustain the cessation of hostilities.

While the United States and Russian efforts are critical, the United States and Russia are not the

only actors that can make a difference. New Zealand supports the International Syria Support Group and the Security Council putting their weight behind the political talks. We are open to any course of action that would be helpful and effective and would welcome the views of the Special Envoy, the United States and Russia in particular on how this Council might best support their efforts.

We all need to remember that the stakes are high. The breakdown of the peace process would be catastrophic for the Syrian people and for preserving what remains of this shattered country. We look forward to discussing the press statement just circulated by the United Kingdom and to early agreement upon it.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I would like to thank the delegation of the United Kingdom and the Egyptian presidency for initiating and convening this very timely open briefing. My special gratitude goes to the briefers for their detailed overview of the current situation in Aleppo, in particular, and in Syria, in general.

Ukraine strongly condemns the air strikes and indiscriminate shelling carried out in and around Aleppo over the recent period, which took the lives of more than 250 people and left thousands injured and wounded. Last week's bombardment of Al-Quds hospital in the innocent Sukkari neighbourhood of Aleppo led to the death of two doctors, including the only paediatrician in the city, three medical support staff and dozens of patients, among them children. Yesterday and yet another hospital in Aleppo, Al-Dabit hospital, came under fire. At least three people were killed and dozens of civilians were wounded.

The escalation of violence has also been observed in other parts of Syria, for example, in Dar'a, where heavy fighting and aerial bombardments have resumed. We commend the Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his efforts in bringing the cessation of hostilities in Syria back on track. But how can that be achieved when the Government pushes on with a military offensive in Aleppo, provoking a further escalation in fighting that leads to the death of scores of civilians trapped in the city?

We have heard the claims that Al-Nusra was being targeted. However, it is not acceptable that, in the process, hospitals and the city's other vital infrastructure had to be destroyed, leaving thousands of civilians without water, electricity, medical care and food. It is hard to believe that such an offensive by the Syrian regime would be possible without the approval of if major ally, which poses itself as a mediator in the negotiating process. Amazingly enough, that very delegation moments ago tried to convince us that "recently the situation in Syria has radically improved".

The aerial bombardments must stop. The indiscriminate attacks against civilians must stop. Only an immediate recommitment to the cessation of hostilities, which must include Aleppo, can alleviate the plight of the Syrian people. Against the backdrop of the rapidly increasing violence in and around Aleppo, Ukraine considers the unanimous adoption of resolution 2286 (2016) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict to be very timely and an extremely important step. We call on all sides to fully respect that resolution's provisions. The failure to do that will lead to the collapse of the cessation of hostilities and bring more violence death and destruction, while further undermining the prospects for finding a negotiated solution to the Syrian conflict. In this regard, we call upon all parties to strictly comply with their obligations under resolution 2268 (2016) on the cessation of hostilities and resume substantive talks in Geneva on all aspects stipulated in resolution 2254 (2015).

Finally, I wish to put on record the strong support of our delegation for the draft press statement circulated by the United Kingdom just now. It deserves urgent approval and it does not deserve at all to be labelled as a propagandistic step, as the Russian delegation has alleged. We urge other members of the Council to seriously consider it.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): I thank the president for convening this meeting on Aleppo. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Under-Secretaries-General Feltman and O'Brien for their detailed briefings.

It was almost two months ago that we unanimously adopted resolution 2268 (2016), endorsing in full the United States-Russian Federation joint statement on the cessation of hostilities in Syria. After the adoption of this resolution, we saw some remarkable developments in the Syrian political process and considerable improvement in humanitarian access. Since the crisis is far from coming to an end, however, we cannot be satisfied with these temporary achievements.

At the same time, we should admit that the cessation of hostilities gave hope to the Syrian people. Now such hope is being lost in Syria, especially in Aleppo, an important Middle East cultural heritage site. We see

an escalation of violence and fighting in Aleppo. In this context, we welcome the latest news of agreement between the United States and Russia towards extending the cessation of hostilities to Aleppo. We hope this welcome effort will be implemented.

Japan strongly urges all parties to fully implement resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016). Yesterday, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2286 (2016), which addresses the protection of medical personnel and facilities. That resolution does not focus on any specific conflict area. However, Syria, in particular Aleppo, is a typical situation that the resolution envisages.

For the implementation of resolution 2286 (2016) in Aleppo, the role of States with influence on the ground is critical. Japan urges all State, in particular the Syrian Arab Republic and the States members of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) to thoroughly implement this resolution.

On the draft press statement circulated a few moments ago by the United Kingdom, I support the idea of sending a clear message of the Council. The draft seems to capture all important points.

In conclusion, I would like to state the Japan will continue to work with members of the Council and the ISSG for a lasting political settlement through assistance that gives the people of Syria hope for a better future.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank the delegations of the United Kingdom and France for requesting this meeting. I would like to thank the President for having managed to do whatever it took to make this meeting happen.

I would also like to thank Mr. Feltman and Mr. O'Brien for their briefings. I am not losing hope that one of these days Mr. O'Brien might enter the Chamber and say "I have some good news." But in the four months that I have been here, unfortunately, reality in all its cruelty has been imposed on us. Some 50 years ago, speaking of another war, the American poet, Robert Allen Zimmerman, better known as Bob Dylan, asked the question:

(*spoke in English*)

> "How many deaths will it take till he knows
> That too many people have died?"

The question remains as valid today as it was then. How many more deaths will we have to see? How many more hospitals will need to be destroyed? How many more children will have to be killed? How many more? It would seem that for some people, certain games are more important than the lives of human beings.

In an intergovernmental organization such as ours, the main responsibility for such issues falls on States, particularly those most directly involved and especially those that are directly involved and support one party to the conflict or another. We welcome the joint efforts of the United States and Russia that have allowed the cessation of hostilities to include Aleppo. Syria is suffering and Aleppo is suffering. We therefore hope they will be able to exert the necessary pressure on the various actors on the ground.

We must not forget that, in the confusion prevailing on the ground in areas where various non-State armed groups are taking part in the combat, any non-State group that crosses the border — even if it is merely circumstantially allied with a terrorist group — is as much a terrorist as the terrorist group itself. Consequently, the main countries currently involved in the negotiations should exert all possible influence on any party over which they have influence in order to affect the situation on the ground.

Uruguay remains ready to support efforts and initiatives aimed at strengthening the cessation of hostilities, humanitarian access and the political process — the famous three pacts mentioned by Mr. Staffan de Mistura. We will continue to devote all our efforts to that end.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I too thank Mr. Feltman and Mr. O'Brien for their briefings, amd the delegations of France and the United Kingdom for requesting this urgent meeting of the Council, following the unprecedented escalation of violence taking place in Aleppo. A city that has for millennia been the cradle of rich cultures and civilizations, with a place on the World Heritage List, Aleppo has borne the brunt of the Syrian crisis since the end of the cessation of hostilities.

The hope raised by the cessation of hostilities agreement soon gave way to unrestrained attacks on the civilian population due to multiple violations of the February agreement, as has just been confirmed by the briefers. With several hundred dead in the past few days, the city has been the site of indiscriminate attacks on civilians, including women and children,

and on medical facilities and markets by parties to the conflict. Unfortunately, the same situation prevails in Homs, Damascus and Deir ez-Zor, to name just a few, where clashes have led to heavy civilian losses.

Given that alarming situation, the Senegalese delegation strongly condemns those violations, which the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has rightly described as displaying monstrous contempt for the lives of civilians. It is equally important at this critical stage in the peace negotiations to urge all parties to abide by the February cessation of hostilities agreement, which was endorsed by the Council in resolution 2268 (2016), and to meet their obligations under international humanitarian law.

These clashes have come at a special juncture in the negotiating process among the parties to the conflict, led by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura. Senegal therefore welcomes the meetings among the Secretary of State of the United States and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Russia, Saudi Arabia, France and Germany in an effort to promote an atmosphere conducive to a resumption of the ceasefire. We dare to hope that, with the valuable assistance of the International Syria Support Group, those efforts will bear fruit for the civilian victims of the crisis, which is now in its fifth year. Now more than ever, it is the Council's responsibility to ensure that peace talks resume, with a genuine ceasefire in place, and that a political transition is led by Syrians in a spirit of reconciliation.

In view of the ongoing significant impact of terrorism on the conflict in Syria, my delegation wishes to firmly condemn the persistent terrorist attacks on civilians in Syria, as is currently the case in Aleppo. Given the situation, Senegal believes it necessary that we issue a statement to send a clear message to the parties to the conflict.

In conclusion, I reiterate my delegation's full support for the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura. Likewise, we welcome the agreement between Russia and the United States, which has just been announced, and call on the members of the International Syria Support Group to continue to strengthen their meaningful contribution to a political settlement based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex) and resolutions 2254 (2015) 2268 (2016).

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the convening of this meeting on the situation in Aleppo and the briefings provided by Mr. Feltman and Mr. O'Brien.

My delegation has been closely following developments in Aleppo and is concerned that the situation on the ground may threaten the progress made since the the cessation of hostilities began. However, we believe that the political forum in Geneva should be maintained and strengthened. There is no doubt that the cessation of hostilities has had a positive impact on the peace negotiations. The scenario in Syria has changed in recent months, especially in late February when various opposition groups joined the peace process, while other groups continued to coordinate their military operations with the Al-Nusra Front, as we have seen in Aleppo and other Syrian cities.

The negotiations among the parties in Geneva, as part of the peace process led by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, should be resumed as soon as possible and without conditions. We reiterate our support for Mr. De Mistura in pushing for a comprehensive peace process that will prioritize negotiations as the only way to end the vicious war that has afflicted that country over the past five years. To that end, we urge the Syrian opposition to display a constructive attitude and commit to working to combat Al-Nusra and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS). We emphasize that such terrorist groups are not covered under resolution 2268 (2016) and must be fought and overthrown in accordance with international law.

Regarding the peace negotiations, we believe that the decision of the opposition's Riyadh platform does not contribute to the definitive settlement for Syria that we all desire. We therefore hope that the countries concerned can exercise their influence to persuade the opposition to join the political negotiations, rejecting the extremist violence of ISIS and Al-Nusra, which represent a threat to international peace and security, and to return to the negotiating table as soon as possible. We hope that all the ethnic factions and minorities, such as the Kurds, who are an important factor to bringing about peace in Syria, will be represented. We must ensure that every sector of civil society in Syria, including women, participates in the peace talks.

We recognize that the progress that has been made would not have been possible without the participation of the International Syria Support Group and its task

force in helping to monitor the cessation of hostilities and ensure humanitarian access. We believe that the humanitarian response should be guided by a neutral, balanced approach so as to ensure that it is not politicized. In that regard, Member States should work to ensure that the humanitarian response reaches every sector of society. We condemn the indiscriminate attacks on hospitals and medical facilities and on civilians in those facilities. We would like to recall that such facilities are protected under international humanitarian law and therefore should not be military targets, as provided for in resolution 2286 (2016), which the Council adopted unanimously yesterday.

We must continue to urge for a lasting peace settlement. We hope the peace process in Syria will be supported by the people of Syria themselves, without foreign interference, where the common interest should be in attaining a country free of terrorists and focused on its future. Lastly, any solution to the armed conflict should be political and peaceful, signaling peace for the people of Syria with respect for the country's independence and territorial integrity.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman and Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for their briefings.

The recent escalation of the conflict in some parts of Syria, especially Aleppo, has resulted in large numbers of casualties among civilians and medical and humanitarian relief workers. China sympathizes deeply with the Syrian people in their suffering. We condemn all attacks on civilian and humanitarian facilities.

The Syrian conflict cannot be settled by military means, which will result only in greater unrest and disaster. In that regard, China appreciates the new round of efforts made by the Russian Federation and the United States. The top priority now is for the parties in Syria to put the interests of their nation and people above everything else, cherish their hard-won ceasefire, abide strictly by the relevant Security Council resolutions, implement the agreement on the cessation of hostilities effectively and end all attacks on civilian and humanitarian facilities immediately in order to regain the earlier momentum of the ceasefire. The implementation of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities has played an important role in expanding the humanitarian relief operations and advancing the Geneva peace talks.

In spite of the recent escalation of tensions in some areas of Syria, in most parts of the country the ceasefire has by and large been maintained. The international community and the parties concerned should adopt effective measures as soon as possible to consolidate the results that have been achieved so far. Other countries in the region should act in the interests of maintaining regional peace and stability generally and play a constructive role in achieving a full ceasefire and a halt to the violence in Syria. The members of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) should work together and consult as soon as possible on specific measures for controlling the situation, thereby creating conditions conducive to advancing the political process in Syria and expanding humanitarian relief operations.

The Geneva peace talks have recently managed to make progress despite difficulties and setbacks, with the parties to the talks reaching a preliminary understanding on some aspects. China appreciates the important role that has been played in that regard by Mr. Staffan de Mistura, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria. The more complex the situation in Syria, the more essential it is to pursue a political settlement without wavering, to insist on enabling the Syrian people themselves to decide their country's future and destiny and on the role of the United Nations as the main conduit for good offices, to firmly support the work of Special Envoy de Mistura and ensure that the next round of the peace talks in Geneva is resumed as soon as possible. The parties in Syria should work on the principle of addressing the easier issues first and moving to more difficult ones, meeting each other halfway, establishing mutual trust and gradually arriving at a solution acceptable to all.

Countering terrorism is an important component of the efforts to address the Syrian issue. If terrorism is not eradicated, the Syrian people will have no peace and the countries of the region will have no security. International cooperation in fighting terrorism must adhere to uniform standards and make full use of the leading and coordinating role of the United Nations and its Security Council. We should do all we can to fight all those identified as terrorists by the Council. Recently, terrorist groups have frequently used chemical materials as weapons, and the international community must come up with effective ways to respond to that issue as soon as possible.

As a permanent member of the Security Council and a member of the ISSG, China has been working

tirelessly to achieve a political settlement of the Syrian question. At a meeting of ISSG foreign ministers, Mr. Wang Yi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, laid out China's four-point proposal for a settlement and put forward a specific programme for advancing the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, expediting progress on humanitarian relief work and advancing the political process. The special envoy for Syria of the Chinese Government recently visited Geneva, Syria and other countries concerned to engage in an in-depth exchange of views with the parties involved on the maintenance of the cessation of hostilities, the expansion of humanitarian relief and the advancement of the Geneva peace talks. We will continue to play an active and constructive role in advancing a comprehensive, equitable and appropriate settlement of the Syrian question.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): The beginning of the year seemed to offer fresh and renewed hope for the people of Syria. A breakthrough was made in securing access for humanitarian assistance for more than 500,000 people in besieged and hard-to-reach areas. The violence was significantly reduced, thanks to the agreement on a cessation of hostilities. Most importantly, peace talks aimed at solving the political deadlock had finally gained some traction. However, in recent weeks the fighting in Aleppo has intensified. It appears that the fragile cessation of hostilities is no longer holding and has collapsed there. We cannot allow the progress so painstakingly made thus far to unravel.

I would like to thank Mr. Feltman and Mr. O'Brien for their comprehensive briefings on the latest developments in Aleppo. We also thank the United Kingdom for requesting today's urgent Council meeting in the light of the deteriorating situation in Aleppo.

It was only yesterday that the Council adopted the landmark resolution 2286 (2016), which seeks to protect the wounded and sick and medical and humanitarian personnel and their supplies and facilities. Yet on the very same day, the Al-Dabit maternity hospital in Aleppo was struck, with at least three medical staff members and patients killed. It seems that scant, if any, respect is accorded for the neutrality and impartiality of medical facilities. It is all the more telling when six medical centres have been attacked in less than a week. We wish to reaffirm that such attacks, whether premeditated or otherwise, are simply unacceptable. Reports of the Government's aim to encircle eastern Aleppo, placing its residents under one of the largest sieges of the conflict, are alarming. Besieging that territory would inevitably lead to another catastrophic humanitarian situation. The Security Council is duty-bound to ensure that the calamity in the four towns of Madaya, Fo'ah, Kafraya and Zabadani is not repeated in Aleppo.

We welcome and support the talks between Special Envoy De Mistura and the Foreign Ministers of Jordan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United States, Germany and France, as well as the head of the opposition, Mr. Riyad Hijab. In addition to the truce brokered by the Russian Federation and the United States in Latakia and near Damascus last week, we welcome the news of the days of silence beginning last night in Aleppo. A full and immediate restoration of the truce in Aleppo and elsewhere in Syria is key if we are to rebuild confidence, which was shattered by the sharp escalation of violence and hostilities in recent weeks.

With the start of the days of silence in Aleppo and other areas, we call on the parties to the conflict to commit to the following provisions. First, they should immediately cease hostilities and attacks against civilians and civilian objects. Secondly, they should allow safe, unimpeded and unhindered humanitarian access to the population in Aleppo. We stress that the delivery of humanitarian assistance must be allowed to reach all civilians regardless of their political affiliations. Thirdly, they should build on the consensus among the Government and opposition groups during the most recent round of peace talks on the necessity for a political transition in Syria. Fourthly, they should urgently engage with the United Nations, in particular Special Envoy De Mistura, with a view to resuming the peace talks in Geneva and recommencing their deliberations, based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2015), including on the political transition.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We thank Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Stephen O'Brien, for their briefings.

We are extremely concerned about the latest developments in Aleppo and the pattern of systematic destruction of the city, as Under-Secretary-General Feltman put it, and about the heavy loss of life due to the brutal clashes between rebel groups and Government forces in this divided Syrian city. The senseless bloodshed must stop immediately.

The deal struck by the United States and Russia to stop the bloodshed in Aleppo must deliver, and deliver without further delay. The surge in fighting over the past two weeks has already cost hundreds of lives and, unfortunately, the nationwide cessation of hostilities, which we hoped could hold, is on the verge of collapse. Even though we all know, including the parties to the conflict, that a military solution is not possible, the reality on the ground is that neither side wants to relinquish its positions and both seem intent on undermining the efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy De Mistura to solve the crisis through dialogue and negotiations. That is, of course, due in large part to the fact that the Security Council and international and regional stakeholders remain divided and continue backing the opposing sides in this sinister, devastating war.

On previous occasions in which we have exchanged views with Special Envoy De Mistura, there was still some hope that the Geneva process, which brought together so many stakeholders and established a series of deadlines for transition and constitutional reform, could be successful. We genuinely believed that the cessation of hostilities would create space for dialogue and peace. However, the current reality on the ground makes it clear that the parties concerned are not interested in dialogue, but rather in playing strategic games. The situation is further complicated by the presence of various terrorist groups in civilian areas and by the fact that those groups are not part of any negotiating process or ceasefire agreements.

Even though the fight against terrorists is a top priority, concerted efforts must be pursued, in particular by the International Syria Support Group ceasefire task force, by urging the parties committed to the Geneva process to put an end to military offensives — offensives that do not specifically target terrorist groups. Also, considering that the humanitarian situation is getting worse every day, we strongly urge all parties to respect the cessation of hostilities proposal, act accordingly and immediately allow for the delivery of humanitarian aid and medical evacuations.

It is unfortunate that Security Council statements have so little effect on the parties to the conflict. However, we must continue making our voices heard until reason finally prevails. Inaction on this issue will be felt for generations. We therefore sincerely hope that the Geneva process will not collapse and that the parties will put down their weapons and resume negotiating a peaceful political transition.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Egypt.

I address the Security Council today not only in my capacity as a representative of a member State of the Security Council, but also as an Arab and as an Egyptian citizen who is tormented by the tragedy that the Syrian people are facing owing to an armed conflict that has been raging on for five years.

The Syrian popular movement started in March, 2011. It was a peaceful movement that sought change. However, many factors led to an increase in protests, confrontations and the killing of innocent people. The situation has deteriorated over the past five years. External interference in Syrian affairs has increased in an unprecedented manner. Militias, foreign terrorist fighters and weapons have been given access to Syria to fight on behalf of external and internal parties. The peaceful movement soon disappeared and the situation deteriorated into a proxy armed conflict. The Syrian territory became a safe haven for terrorism, sectarianism and chaos.

Following long years of Syrian suffering, the international community has recently been able, for the first time, through the Security Council and the International Syria Support Group, to reach consensus on a political solution. It is important to stress that the international consensus has been based on certain parallel pillars, which are as follows: first, putting an end to the hostilities in Syria in order to achieve a nationwide ceasefire; secondly, achieving political transition through negotiations between the Syrian Government and the broadest possible spectrum of the opposition, in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex); thirdly, improving the humanitarian situation and ensuring humanitarian access to people in need in Syria, including in besieged areas; and, fourthly, combating terrorism and extremism.

Despite the clarity of the elements of the international consensus and their compliance with humanitarian and political law, and despite the positive developments on the ground in Syria since the beginning of the cessation of hostilities, we have been surprised once again by the renewed heavy fighting in Aleppo and the deaths of many civilians and innocent people. In that regard, I

would like to reiterate once again that Egypt condemns the shelling of civilians, especially the shelling of hospitals and the harrowing scenes resulting from the shelling. I would also like to stress the need for all parties in Syria to respect international humanitarian law and to ensure access to humanitarian and medical assistance. Egypt is committed to cooperating with its partners in the Council to ensure respect for resolution 2286 (2016), on the protection of medical personnel and medical facilities in time of war. The Council adopted the resolution yesterday based on a draft resolution submitted by Egypt, Japan, New Zealand, Spain and Uruguay.

Counter-terrorism remains one of the main pillars to settle the Syrian crisis and to maintain international peace and security. However, certain Powers continue to be reluctant to take action, and that impedes a solution. Some still believe that they are immune to the dangers of terrorism and that they will be able to take advantage of terrorism if they choose to neglect or support it. It may be high time to be honest with ourselves and to set matters straight. The Council and the members of the International Syria Support Group have agreed on excluding terrorist organizations from the ceasefire. However, a noticeable reluctance in confronting this danger and an inexplicable politicization have allowed the Al-Nusra Front, or the Al-Qaida affiliate in Syria, to take advantage of the cessation of hostilities to gain more ground in the country, especially in Aleppo. The Al-Nusra Front has been able to increase recruitment into its ranks and to contain some of the armed factions that have not been designated as terrorist organizations. Those factions continue to ignore the de-escalation. They insist on cooperating and coordinating with the Al-Nusra Front even after two months of the start of the cessation of hostilities and despite the pleas that they distance themselves from those terrorist organizations. That is unacceptable and should not go unnoticed.

I take this opportunity to call once again on the International Syria Support Group, especially the co-Chairs — the United States of America and Russia — to put an end to that reluctance and prevarication. The Al-Nusra Front and its allies are as dangerous as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham. Neither the people of Syria nor the countries and the peoples of the region will accept them as part of their present or future.

The Syrian people is the sole party to bear the brunt of the Syrian tragedy. Syrian blood has been shed because of the interest of States and groups and because of misleading facts. Children and women have suffered. We need to thwart the narrow interests that have controlled the fate of the Syrian people over the past few years. If the situation continues, it will jeopardize the future of the people of Syria. Therefore, I would like to reiterate that the Geneva process, mediated by Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, according to resolution 2254 (2015), which seeks to reach a political transition in Syria, remains the only beacon of hope for a settlement. I call on all members of the international community to stand behind the process and behind the Special Envoy in good faith. I call on them to give the utmost priority to the interests of the Syrian people, free from trying to settle political scores and promoting other interests.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Mounzer (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on Egypt's accession to the presidency of the Security Council for this month.

Yesterday, in Aleppo city alone, 28 civilians were killed, including infants, in addition to 80 persons who were wounded following the targeting by armed terrorist groups — or the "moderate opposition", as some in the Council like to call them — of the Al-Zubayr maternity hospital and many neighbourhoods in Aleppo. Regrettably, the number of fatalities is likely to increase, as there are many critically wounded people.

At this point, I say to the representatives of States that they either support or cover up terrorist acts in Syria: Enough hypocrisy, enough politicization and enough playing with the blood of Syrians. How can the opposition be called moderate when it kills infants in medical facilities and when it bombs civilians indiscriminately on a daily basis? How can that opposition be moderate when it rains down thousands of indiscriminate shells on Aleppo, when it has used light and heavy rockets, explosive shells, gas canisters and mortars to kill more than 118 civilians, wounding more than 206 people, including women, children and elderly just in the past 10 days? This is the very embodiment of terrorism. It cannot be called by any other name.

All this escalation by armed , with the Al-Nusra Front and allied groups at the helm, was not coincidental.

It came in the wake of the failure by those terrorist organizations to carry out a wide-ranging attack from many points against Aleppo city under orders from well-known States. The attack coincided with the withdrawal of the so-called Al-Riyadh delegation from the latest round of the Geneva talks. Two things should therefore be clear to everyone.

First, the Syrian Government has participated in the Geneva talks, in good faith and with full seriousness, in order to reach a political settlement to the crisis in Syria. For its part, the Al-Riyadh delegation came with the prior intention to abort the talks. That was made quite clear in its withdrawal from the latest round of talks.

Secondly, the Syrian Government has abided by the cessation of hostilities agreement based on its desire to protect the blood of innocent Syrians, to restore security and stability and to combat terrorism. At the same time, the armed groups allied with the terrorists of Jabhat Al-Nusra have violated the agreement, particularly in Aleppo. That is a manifestation of the threats made by the Al-Riyadh delegation, which has called for burning Syrian cities, thereby confounding the agreement, and for an escalation of military activities against the Syrian Government, thereby flouting the cessation of hostilities and all the efforts made to date to stem the bloodshed of innocent civilians and free them from the cycle of political pressures. What the Syrian Government has been doing in Aleppo city is merely fulfilling its obligation to protect its citizens from terrorism, a response to escalation, killing and destruction by terrorist groups in the city.

Today I would reiterate that the Syrian Government is prepared to effectively participate in any sincere effort aimed at reaching a political settlement that would be decided by Syrians alone, in which they would decide their future and make their choices through an intra-Syrian dialogue under Syrian leadership and without foreign intervention. Such a settlement should ensure Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and rid from it the scourge of terrorism. In that regard, let me stress the importance of the support provided by some States to armed terrorist groups in Syria. It is essential to control the borders, in particular the borders between Turkey and Syria, where terrorists are flowing daily in large numbers.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7688

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7688th meeting
Thursday, 5 May 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Aboulatta	(Egypt)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	France	Mr. Bertoux
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Letter dated 26 April 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/395)

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16-12757 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Letter dated 26 April 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/395)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Ioannis Vrailas, Chargé d'affaires ad interim of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/395, which contains a letter dated 26 April 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting the forty-ninth report of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I now give the floor to Mr. Inzko.

Mr. Inzko: When I addressed the Council six months ago (see S/PV.7555), we were on the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement. That was an opportunity to mark how far Bosnia and Herzegovina had come, but also to recognize that there was much more work needed to ensure lasting stability and a better future for the people of that beautiful country. The signifance of that event was also underlined by an important conference held in Dayton, Ohio, in which former United States President Clinton, one of the peacemakers 20 years ago, participated.

Against that backdrop, on 15 February the country took the historic step of applying for membership in the European Union. Bosnia and Herzegovina chose its direction clearly, and that direction is a future in the European Union. Of course, transition is a process and not a event, and the transformation that the country must undergo on the path to membership will make the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina better off. Accordingly, we are fully united in supporting the country in its European Union (EU) aspirations. What lies ahead for Bosnia and Herzegovina will undoubtedly be a challenging period, but it is one the country can navigate if all parties work together and fully respect the Dayton Peace Agreement.

As I stress in my report (S/2016/395, annex), developments on the ground over the past six months have been mixed. It remains unclear at what point we can say Bosnia and Herzegovina is irreversibly on course for Euro-Atlantic integration. On the positive side, as I mentioned, the country submitted its membership application with the European Union. Associated with this, the authorities have also taken steps to implement a reform agenda, including the adoption of new labour legislation in both entities. In this context, I would like to praise the significant efforts of the European Union Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Lars-Gunnar Wigemark. He has really gone the extra mile.

While the progress achieved by the authorities on the reform agenda is indeed very welcome, let us not lose sight of the need to accelerate the pace of reform. There must be much more urgency in the decision-making process. From the point of view of my mandate to uphold the Peace Agreement, I welcome the fact that the authorities of Republika Srpska have not taken further steps to implement a referendum on the authority of the State Court and the Prosecutor's Office and on the authorities of the High Representative, as that would be a clear violation of the Peace Agreement. That step is indeed welcome.

My current assessment is that although the referendum has still has not been officially withdrawn, it does appear to have been put aside. I must note, however, that various political actors have continued to advocate the organization of yet another entity referendum on the validity of a recent decision of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this context, I need to stress that the Peace Agreement explicitly states that the decisions of the Constitutional Court are final and binding.

In addition to efforts made to meet European Union requirements, I would like to commend the efforts of the authorities to register military properties to the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is a condition for the activation of a NATO membership action plan and one of the prerequisites set by my Steering Board for the closure of the Office of the High Representative (OHR). I call on Republika Srpska authorities to enable the registration of such properties located on the territory of that entity, as the Federation has been doing. If Republika Srpska authorities are as keen to see the closure of my Office and my departure as they claim, then they need to deliver the results needed to enable the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board to take that decision.

Another largely positive factor has been the regional situation. Serbian Prime Minister Vučić's high profile commitment of notable donor funds to Srebrenica did much to foster reconciliation. By the way, he has personally visited Srebrenica twice. The very important first joint session of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Government of the Republic of Serbia in November was a very welcome and positive step forward. A similar joint session with the Croatian Government has been announced, and is also a positive development.

In the broader region, a decision was taken a few days ago in Zagreb by the Presidents of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Turkey to reinvigorate the process of trilateral meetings among those three countries. I take this opportunity to encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina and its neighbours to significantly increase the level of State-to-State cooperation, to the benefit of all sides.

Despite these positive developments, the forward momentum they created was diminished, regrettably, by a number of parallel developments during the reporting period. The readiness of some political actors to question and challenge the Peace Agreement, including new attempts to undermine the sovereignty and authority of the State and its institutions, continues to cast a shadow over positive efforts to advance economic and social reforms. Sharply divergent reactions to the verdict of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the case of wartime Republika Srpska President Radovan Karadžić highlighted the need for greater efforts towards reconciliation.

I was deeply shocked by the high-profile opening by the current Republika Srpska President of a dormitory named after Karadžić only two days before his first-instance conviction for genocide and crimes against humanity In our countries, it would be unthinkable to glorify individuals convicted of committing mass atrocities. With this act, the Republika Srpska President sent an insidious message to those affected by the horror and trauma of wartime ethnic cleansing, and put himself outside the standards and morality of the civilized world. I also take this opportunity to reject his thesis that fairness in transitional justice requires the prosecution of equal numbers of war criminals from different ethnic groups. We must seek justice for every innocent individual victim and his or her parents and relatives, but applying a principle of ethnic parity to mass graves or war criminals would do a disservice to victims and survivors of all nationalities.

The passing of time brings new challenges to all of us, and Bosnia and Herzegovina is no different. A terrorism-inspired act carried out by a single attacker in Sarajevo on 18 November resulted in the death of two soldiers of the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The attack once again highlighted the challenges facing the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the fight against terrorism.

An additional issue of concern is the participation of some citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina in foreign conflicts, some of whom have returned and could pose a threat to the future stability of the country. Additional incidents continue to occur that threaten to undermine inter-ethnic relations. For example, processions organized in March in Srebrenica and other municipalities by supporters of Vojislav Šešelj to celebrate his first-instance verdict of not guilty. This raised fear among Bosniak returnees who are still trying to come to terms with the crimes of the past.

Other direct challenges to the Peace Agreement during the reporting period included the conclusion reached by the Republika Srpska Government in December that the entity's institutions would cease cooperating with the State Investigation and Protection Agency, a State-level police agency, over a legally authorized raid on a police station in Republika Srpska in relation to war crimes investigations. While the Republika Srpska authorities eventually resumed operational cooperation under a signed agreement, that apparent interference of politics into police work

is unacceptable, in particular at a time when agencies need to be strengthening their cooperation.

The continued policy by representatives of the ruling party in the Republika Srpska, in particular its President, to advocate for the secession of that entity from Bosnia and Herzegovina troubles me deeply and raises fundamental questions about the commitment of some officials and political parties to fully respect the Peace Agreement. In that context, I remain concerned that that party's official platform includes a threat to organize an independence referendum in 2018 if certain conditions are not met. I take this opportunity to say once again that the Peace Agreement does not grant the entities the right to secede, and any attempt to change the Peace Agreement requires the agreement of all the parties.

In my previous report to the Council, and again today, I described the opportunity provided to Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders by the European Union and how critical it was for them to demonstrate that they were ready and able to deliver on the reform agendas they had set for themselves, while also fully respecting the Peace Agreement. That opportunity must now be embraced with both hands. What that means in practice is an acceleration of concrete results. When I next report to the Council, in six months' time, I sincerely hope that the authorities will have undertaken that challenge with greater urgency. Let us therefore together issue a challenge to the authorities to deliver on the following five points: first, publication of the results of the 2013 census; secondly, a final agreement on the EU coordination mechanism; thirdly, the full implementation of decisions of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the rulings on the Mostar elections, State property and the 9 January Day in the Republika Srpska; fourthly, measurable progress on fiscal and economic reforms, including meeting the outstanding requirements set by the International Monetary Fund for a new arrangement; and, lastly, real progress on implementing the outstanding requirements for the closure of the OHR. For that to happen, political leaders will need to stop linking issues into ever-more complex and out-of-reach packages and put the needs of citizens first.

The year 2016 can be one of progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration, economic growth and job creation, but only if the country pulls together and works as one. Questioning and challenging the fundamentals of the Peace Agreement — which is also the Constitution — is not a formula for success. Given the complex environment that continues to prevail in the country, the presence of the European Union-led peacekeeping force in Bosnia and Herzegovina with an executive mandate remains of vital importance, thereby enabling my Office and others in the international community to fulfil our respective mandates, as well as reassuring citizens from all ethnic groups throughout the country of a safe and secure environment. I very much hope that in six months' time I will be able to report to the members of the Council a marked improvement based on the delivery of concrete results and a situation where there is full respect for the Peace Agreement. That is the surest way forward for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I would like to conclude today with some positive news, which offer encouragement in our efforts to ensure sustainable stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also serve to highlight the challenges. The first is a small, even trivial, example, but one of broader symbolic significance. Just a few days ago, several local associations agreed to create a single karate association for the whole country. But even that small step required 20 years of efforts towards reaching that goal. The second piece of news is of great significance. The day after tomorrow, the splendid Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka, demolished in the war along with 15 other mosques in the city, will be reopened. That will be an event of broader significance for reconciliation and tolerance in the region and beyond, and a huge number of honorary guests are expected from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Turkey and elsewhere. It will be a very special moment not only for Banja Luka but for humankind as a whole.

On that positive note, I would like to thank the Security Council for its attention and continued support for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Inzko for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): It is our pleasure to welcome High Representative Valentin Inzko back to the Security Council and to thank him for his comprehensive briefing and report (S/2016/395, annex). As this is my first statement on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina after Ukraine assumed its non-permanent membership in the Council, I would like

to assure Mr. Inzko of our full support for his activities as High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement.

Ukraine aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later on behalf of the European Union (EU).

First and foremost, we congratulate the Government and the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina on their application to join the European Union. Ukraine hopes that historic decision will provide additional impetus for further progress under the General Framework Agreement for Peace. Ukraine welcomes the readiness of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina to advance the reform agenda. We look forward to the conclusion of a final agreement between the EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the adaptation of the trade provisions of the Stabilization and Association Agreement.

Ukraine also praises the efforts of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Government aimed at the activation of the country's NATO Membership Action Plan. We support close cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and NATO as an important factor of security in Europe. In that regard, we hope for the quickest-possible resolution of the issue of immovable defence property as the precondition to the country's Membership Action Plan.

Our meeting today is taking place at an important moment for Bosnia and Herzegovina. A little more than 20 years ago, the General Framework Agreement for Peace was reached at Dayton. A lot of work has been done, but yet after 20 years of peace we are still seeing serious political divisions inside the country.

As a positive sign of efforts to find a way to bridge the differences, we note the decision of Republika Srpska authorities not to hold the referendum on the State judiciary. However, the absence of an appropriate decision on the subject by the Republika Srpska National Assembly is a worrying sign. I would like to underscore that any referendum that contradicts the provisions of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of the Dayton Agreement is illegitimate.

Ukraine shares the concerns of High Representative Inzko with regard to certain statements by Republika Srpska officials calling for that entity's secession from Bosnia and Herzegovina. We strongly condemn any provocative actions that could undermine the progress under the Dayton Peace Agreement and the stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I once again reiterate our strong support for Bosnia and Herzegovina's territorial integrity, which is guaranteed by its Constitution and by international law, including the Charter of the United Nations.

Ukraine believes that more efforts could have been made to achieve more sustainable progress on the 5+2 agenda. We hope that, during the next reporting period, we will see long-awaited developments towards meeting the set of objectives and conditions. We believe that special attention should be paid to the issue of prospective defence property, in particular the registration of specific properties located on the territory of Republika Srpska. Other areas where progress would be highly welcome, in addition to implementing the *Sejdic-Finci* judgment, include the issues of the publication of the 2013 census results, the proper functioning of the coordination mechanism on EU matters, the implementation of the Constitutional Court's decision on Mostar and delivering on outstanding International Monetary Fund requirements.

Finally, I would like to underscore that, given the information we heard today from the High Representative, it is very important to overcome political differences in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to achieve tangible progress in implementing the necessary reforms, as well as the 5+2 agenda. Achieving all five objectives and the two conditions as quickly as possible would be the best way forward.

In our view, as we enter the third decade of the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Council has an obligation to provide all necessary political support to ensuring the country's further peaceful development. It is of utmost importance that any attempt to encroach on Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence, unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity be resolutely addressed.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): I thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing, service, representation of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and stewardship of the Office of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The United States again reiterates its strong support for High Representative Inzko's mandate under the Dayton Peace Agreement as the final authority with regard to the interpretation of the civilian implementation of the Peace Agreement. We of course look forward to the day when Bosnia and Herzegovina meets the objectives and

conditions established by the Peace Implementation Council for the closure of the Office of the High Representative, but let us be very clear — that day has not yet arrived.

The United States commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's success is enormous, and our commitment to peace there enduring. It is in that spirit that we welcome Bosnia and Herzegovina's positive steps towards greater Euro-Atlantic integration. The submission of its European Union (EU) membership application in February was an important milestone, and I would like to congratulate Bosnia and Herzegovina on that step. The United States also welcomes the Government's full registration of 21 defence properties within the Federation, which is a positive sign of tangible progress to meeting Bosnia and Herzegovina's NATO Membership Action Plan.

Despite those positive steps, continuing down the path of Euro-Atlantic integration will require vision. It will require political will. It will require real follow-through on commitments, and it will require focus to meet the conditions set by the Peace Implementation Council. The United States joins the High Representative in his call for the registration of defence properties within the Republika Srpska and continued registration of additional properties within the Federation. We also continue to encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina to make genuine progress on the EU socioeconomic reform agenda. As the High Representative noted, new labour laws in both entities are important steps towards improving the business climate in Bosnia and Herzegovina and making the country more competitive in the global market place. However, critical work remains to be done to enhance the rule of law, tackle corruption and improve the overall political climate in the country, which are steps that will benefit all of Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens.

Impunity and divisiveness are not acceptable. I am particularly disturbed by the truly outrageous and dangerously provocative decision to name a building in honour of Radovan Karadžić and the timing of the proclamation in advance of the ruling of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in his case. Honouring a man who has been charged with and, days later, convicted of genocide is despicable. Such craven political manoeuvres do a disservice to his victims and the country and undermine the spirit of peace and reconciliation needed for Bosnia and Herzegovina to move forward. The United States also remains deeply concerned by politicians who seek to erode the competencies of State-level institutions. In the interest of greater stability and security, we encourage the Republika Srpska National Assembly to formally withdraw its decision to hold a referendum on the State-level Court and Prosecutor's Office.

We look forward to the day when Bosnia and Herzegovina meets the objectives and conditions established by the Peace Implementation Council for the closure of the Office of the High Representative, and when we can say with absolute confidence that Bosnia and Herzegovina has reached full compliance with the Dayton Peace Agreement and is now a peaceful, viable State irreversibly on the course for European integration. We have seen progress, but that day has not yet arrived. For instance, despite the recent surge and local engagement on Mostar, political leaders remain unwilling to make the compromises necessary for the city to hold elections for the first time since 2008. That same intransigence blocks progress on other fundamental issues, such as the release of the 2013 census data, and reflects on individual leaders' credibility with regard to Euro-Atlantic aspirations. We encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders and all members of the international community to support the actions and reforms needed to reach that milestone and provide all necessary support to the High Representative as he fulfils his mandate.

Finally, I would like to just reiterate the High Representative's own sentiments in his report (S/2016/395, annex) in connection with the death of Mr. Roberts Owen. Mr. Owen gave of his own time and energy to serve as the Presiding Arbitrator of the Arbitral Tribunal for Dispute over the Inter-Entity Boundary in the Brcko Area, and we are grateful for his unwavering dedication to establishing irreversible peace and stability through his work at Dayton and on the Tribunal.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We welcome and thank Mr. Valentin Inzko for having presented the forty-ninth report of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2016/395, annex) and commend his work in assisting in the building of the Bosnia and Herzegovina State.

We take note of the successes achieved and the challenges that lie ahead in consolidating Bosnia and Herzegovina's statehood and the future of unity and peace. As a declaration of principle, we reaffirm our

respect and support for the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina and for the General Framework Agreement for Peace. In our statement, we will focus on three main issues: the general political environment, challenges to the General Framework Agreement and non-cooperation with the High Representative.

With regard to the general political environment, we are encouraged by the application of Bosnia and Herzegovina for membership of the European Union. It is now our expectation that the political leaders will pursue efforts to meet the conditionalities of the reform agenda for the country's integration into the European Union, strengthening the prospects of a united, multi-ethnic, stable and prosperous country advancing towards development.

We welcome the adoption of the labour legislation as part of the reforms that the Republic was entitled to carry out and the disclosure by the Republika Srpska entity that the referendum on the jurisdiction of the Bosnia and Herzegovina State Court and Prosecutor's Office will not go forward. However, the failure by the authorities to reach solutions for a number of issues, such as the European Union coordination mechanism, the announcement of the 2013 census results and the implementation of the decision of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court on Mostar, among others, are matters of concern.

The occurrence, during the reporting period, of a number of security-related incidents, including a terrorist attack resulting in the killing of soldiers, is a call to the authorities on the imperative need to adopt and implement vigorous measures and policies to counter terrorism, and namely to address the issue of foreign terrorist fighters and the danger that they represent when returning home from theatres of war.

Another matter of concern were the reactions to the verdict of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the first instance against Radovan Karadžić, the war-time leader of the self-proclaimed Republika Srpska, who was found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity and sentenced to 40 years of imprisonment, while Vojislav Šešelj was found not guilty for similar indictments. We condemn the outrageous incidents that occurred following the Court's decision and the ensuing security incidents that impacted the overall security situation in the country, undermining the fragile national reconciliation process.

Regarding challenges to the General Framework Agreement for Peace, most worrisome are the statements made by officials of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, the ruling party in the Republika Srpska, advocating for the secession and dissolution of the Bosnia and Herzegovina State. Such statements threaten the General Framework Agreement and the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, they undermine the cohesion of the multi-ethnic society being built in Bosnia and Herzegovina and of national reconciliation at a very crucial moment of the country's life.

We fully support the affirmation made by the High Representative that under the General Framework Agreement, the entities have no right to secede from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country are guaranteed by the Agreement, the Constitution and international law. Concerning non-cooperation with the High Representative, we deeply regret the continued attacks on his Office, as well as the policy of Republika Srpska authorities of denying the High Representative access to official information and documents required to fulfil his mandate. The work accomplished by the Office of the High Representative in support of the peace, security and development of Bosnia and Herzegovina is highly commendable, and we recall that under annex 10 of the General Framework Agreement, all authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina are duty-bound to full cooperation with the High Representative, as well as with international organizations and agencies.

In conclusion, we acknowledge the important role played by the European Union-led military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in supporting the country's efforts to maintain a safe and secure environment conducive to the building of a multi-ethnic society, a multinational State and a democratic country.

Mr. Bertoux (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina for his comprehensive briefing on the situation and for his work.

France aligns itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

France welcomes the fact that the European perspective today serves as the main engine for the development and consolidation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its recent application to join the European Union reflects the overwhelming support of that

perspective within the Bosnian population, as well as the unanimity that exists around this topic within the collegial Presidency of the country. The Council noted these developments that in resolution 2247 (2015), the most recent resolution on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was adopted unanimously on 10 November.

In that context, the European Union will continue now more than ever to support the Bosnian and Herzegovina authorities in the implementation of reforms that meet the economic and social aspirations of the population. The reform agenda adopted last year is crucial to that end. We welcome the fact that it has already produced initial concrete results, such as the adoption of new labour legislation at the entity level.

Nonetheless, the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities must bear in mind that their candidacy is only the beginning of a long and demanding process that will require efforts at the central State and entity levels. It is especially important that a fully operational European coordination mechanism be set up as soon as possible, that significant progress be achieved in the implementation of the reform agenda and the Stabilization and Association Agreement, and that the country advance towards a judicial system that is fully independent, impartial and effective.

More than 20 years after their signing, the Dayton-Paris Peace Accords remain the cornerstone of stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It will be up to the Bosnians themselves to ensure that, when the time is right, their institutions evolve. At a time when the country is facing elections, we call on all political forces to set aside divisive rhetoric that is as outdated as it is dangerous in favour of the construction of the future. Local campaigns should not pit one side against the other on the basis of hatred and rancour, but should lead to constructive discussion of political projects. Faced with mass unemployment, Bosnians deserve that priority be given to the economic development of the territories.

All Bosnians deserve the right to express themselves democratically in free and fair elections. As such, we remain concerned about the situation of the city of Mostar. Indeed, due to the lack of consensus between political forces, its inhabitants have been deprived of their most basic civil rights at the local level for nearly eight years. To accept such a status quo would be irresponsible. However, the only viable solution will be one that creates a consensus among local players. France therefore calls upon those local players to do their all to ensure that elections can be held this year, in respect for the principles reaffirmed by the Peace Implementation Council's communiqué of 2 December 2015.

We note with satisfaction the statements issued by the Republika Srpska authorities on the indefinite postponement of the referendum project, which could have challenged the competence of the central State in the judicial field. Whether it refers to the functioning of judicial institutions or public holidays, compromise solutions must be found. That is in the interest of everyone.

Today, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, despite its weaknesses, seems to be moving in the right direction of normalization. While there is no imminent risk of destabilization, the presence of the international community remains necessary at this stage. Its framework of reference remains, of course, the Dayton-Paris Peace Accords. We therefore call on all parties to cooperate with the institutions mentioned in the Peace Accords, notably the High Representative and the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The absence of manipulation and respect for the rulings of the Tribunal are crucial in order to prevent the revival of dangerous intercommunal tensions. We call on everyone to bear their responsibilities.

Our goal for the coming years remains, without undermining the fundamental principles of the Dayton-Paris Peace Accords, the fully adapt the international presence to current realities on the ground. The consideration of the reconfiguration of the Office of the High Representative should therefore continue.

In the 20 years after experiencing the horror of war, Bosnia and Herzegovina is today advancing in the right direction, with the support of the European Union and its other partners. The responsibility of the international community, including the Council, is to encourage it to continue along that path.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): I would like to thank High Representative Valentin Inzko for his comprehensive briefing and for his latest report to the Council (S/2016/395, annex).

Malaysia takes note of the positive developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the reporting period, as outlined by the High Representative. We welcome

the country's submission of a formal application for membership in the European Union (EU) in February. That latest milestone reflects the continuing aspiration of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its leaders to European integration. We believe that the accompanying political and socioeconomic reforms required for EU membership would pave the way for stability and prosperity for Bosnia and Herzegovina. We therefore urge the leaders to remain steadfast in their commitment to implementing the country's reform agenda.

Malaysia also welcomes the positive developments in relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and its neighbours. That includes the ratification of the State Border Treaty with Montenegro, the visit by the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatia, and the first-ever joint Cabinet meeting with Serbia in Sarajevo.

Despite the positive developments during the reporting period, the commitment of all parties to the Dayton Peace Agreement and to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina unfortunately remains in doubt. Malaysia is alarmed by the continuing challenges, through words and actions, posed by the leaders of the Republika Srpska to the Dayton Peace Agreement, the Office of the High Representative, and the State-level judicial institutions and authorities. Such challenges are clearly against the Peace Agreement, the rule of law and the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Malaysia takes note of the High Representative's briefing on the cancellation of the planned referendum by the Republika Srpska, which would have challenged the authority of the High Representative, as well as the country's rule of law and judiciary. While we welcome this latest development, we regret the fact that the referendum, together with other, similar threats, were called for in the first place. We strongly urge the Republika Srpska authorities to respect the country's Constitution, the various Security Council resolutions and the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Two decades after a devastating war, there is simply no place in the country or the region for divisive, provocative or secessionist rhetoric, which can serve only to perpetuate narrow political agendas at the expense of peace and stability in the region. We also condemn the intimidation, harassment and even death threats that have been directed at the High Representative and the country's international judges. Such acts are unacceptable and must cease immediately. The divergent reactions among the ethnic communities to the recent decisions of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia relating to Radovan Karadžić and Vojislav Šešelj prove that reconciliation is still a distant vision. We call on all parties to respect the rule of law and use this opportunity to make progress on national reconciliation.

In conclusion, Malaysia reiterates the importance of intensifying efforts to fully implement the 5+2 agenda as prerequisites for the closure of the Office of the High Representative. Until then, Malaysia reaffirms its strong support to the Office of the High Representative, as laid down in the Dayton Peace Accords and upheld in various Council resolutions. We also recognize the important role played by the European Union Multinational Stabilization Force in ensuring security and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing.

Recently, thanks to the collective efforts of the Government and the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country has generally maintained stability. Its economy is improving and it has made some headway with the political process and the rule of law. China welcomes those positive developments. We respect the country's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, and we believe that the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina have the right to independently determine their own path to development and their own foreign policy. The international community should respect the choices they have made for their future. China hopes that the members of all the country's ethnic groups will work actively to consolidate the positive results that have been achieved in nation-building, continue to fully implement the Dayton Peace Accords and promote improvement throughout the country on all fronts.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is an important country in the Balkans. Maintaining peace, stability and development there is in the common interests of the entire international community, including all the other countries of the region. Where Bosnia and Herzegovina is concerned, the international community should adopt a balanced and prudent approach that fully respects the leadership and ownership of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and should be committed to promoting

unity among all ethnic groups in the country, harmony, sustainable economic and social development and lasting stability.

China supports High Representative Inzko in his efforts to fulfil his mandate and to work in a manner that will enable him to continue to play a constructive role in advancing the political process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. China is ready to work with the international community in continuing to contribute to achieving lasting peace, stability and development in the country.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I would like to join others in welcoming High Representative Inzko back to the Council. At the outset, I would like to reiterate the United Kingdom's full support for his role and I thank him for his briefing today.

Since we last met on this issue (see S/PV.7555), we have witnessed historic developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have marked 20 years of peace; we have seen one of the worst war criminals of the conflict brought to justice; and we have seen Bosnia and Herzegovina take steps to move beyond its painful history and seek a better future in the European Union (EU). But for all the progress of recent months, Bosnia and Herzegovina's path is not yet set. The United Kingdom sees two challenges ahead. The first is coming to terms with the past; the second is seizing the opportunity of the future.

In any post-conflict environment, coming to terms with the past is vital to building a peaceful future. One way of doing so is by ensuring accountability for past crimes. The landmark *Karadžić* ruling last month brought some welcome closure to one of the darkest chapters in post-war Europe. The verdict will never erase the suffering of the victims and their families, but it sent a powerful message to the world that perpetrators of atrocities will be held accountable for their actions, no matter how much time has elapsed.

Coming to terms with the past also means refraining from actions that reopen old wounds and deepen division. We recognize that others will be deeply disappointed at the *Šešelj* verdict, but we respect the independent judicial process and the judges' decision. As the High Representative has made clear, all parties and all peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina must do their utmost to advance reconciliation. In that regard, just like the High Representative, we welcome the fact that the Republika Srpska referendum on the State-level judiciary is off the table for now, though we regret that the decision to hold the referendum has not yet been formally withdrawn. Such challenges belong in a bygone age.

The same can be said of the continuing impasse in Mostar. For nearly eight years, the people of that city have been denied their democratic right to elect their local representatives, and no agreement has been reached on changes to the law that would enable elections to take place in October. With elections fast approaching, the time has come to make a breakthrough. The people of Mostar need to see positive leadership from all the parties in order to reach agreement as soon as possible, so that they can begin to look to the future. That is true across the country. After years of inertia, Bosnia and Herzegovina has a chance to look to the future, a future in the European Union and NATO. To make that a reality, all its leaders must now work together.

We welcome Bosnia and Herzegovina's renewed commitment to its EU path, as demonstrated by its application for membership earlier this year. We support the High Representative's call to leaders to intensify their efforts to advance reforms aimed at achieving that goal. They will need to work quickly to solve two issues in particular. The first is adapting Bosnia and Herzegovina's stabilization and association agreement to take Croatia's accession to the EU into account; the second is establishing a functioning coordination mechanism that will enable Bosnia and Herzegovina to speak with one voice to the EU on accession matters. We also believe that the population and housing census should be finalized and its results published without delay. We attach crucial importance to the census, not only because of its relevance to the integration process but also because of its instrumental role in economic and social planning. That is particularly urgent in the context of the reform agenda.

Ultimately, to seize the opportunity of the future, the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina need stability and security. That means overcoming the threat posed by terrorism, and the United Kingdom expresses its condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the attack in Sarajevo in November. That attack highlights the challenge facing the Bosnian authorities in the fight against terrorism. We call on all those with authority and in positions of leadership at all levels to cooperate closely in order to prevent further incidents. More broadly, it is clear that stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still not yet entrenched, and

we remain concerned about the political and security situation. A serious breakdown in law and order could be catastrophic. We therefore share the High Representative's assessment that the European Union military mission, with an executive mandate, remains vital. We will therefore support the retention of that crucial asset when its mandate comes up for renewal in November.

I would like to end with this reflection. After a week spent discussing some of the world's most intractable conflicts in this Chamber, Bosnia and Herzegovina should give us hope that there can be a better future for those living in conflict today. But we cannot afford to take our eye off the ball. Let me therefore close by reiterating the United Kingdom's commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's future stability and its future membership of the European Union and NATO. We stand ready to support progress towards those goals.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we would like to thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his briefing.

Venezuela reaffirms its full support and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and believes that the international community must continue to support the implementation of the 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a way to contribute to a peaceful solution of the differences among the parties concerned. In this context, the European Union-led multinational stabilization force in Bosnia and Herzegovina has carried out its work within the framework of the mandate assigned to it, in cooperation with the authorities, to ensure a safe environment for all the ethnic communities in the country.

We reaffirm that it is incumbent on the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to carry out and lead the efforts related to the future of their country, as part of a process through which ethnic groups must genuinely work through dialogue and with respect for the laws and institutions of the country, peace, human rights, cooperation and economic and social development. The High Representative should therefore foster constructive work as part of his primary responsibility for promoting the civilian aspects of the Framework Agreement. His efforts to move that work forward and find common ground among the parties, commensurate with the mandate that has been entrusted to him, must ensure impartiality and transparency, as well as a balanced and prudent approach in which the opinions and views of all stakeholders are reflected.

The strengthening of relationships among Bosnia and Herzegovina and its neighbours is a positive development, which we welcome. In that regard, we underscore in this process the ratification of the border treaty between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, the high-level meetings with Croatian authorities in the context of dialogue and negotiation, and the positive visit to Srebrenica.

Moreover, Venezuela rejects terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as well as the spread of extremism. In that vein, we deplore the murder of two members of the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 18 November 2015 in Rajlovac, near Sarajevo. We also commend the steps that are being taken to avoid the recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters to fight in the armed conflicts besetting the Middle East. Nonetheless, it is necessary to remain vigilant on this issue, which is so crucial to peace and security in the context of fluid international cooperation to confront the scourge of terrorism.

With regard to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed during the armed conflict in the territories that belonged to the former Yugoslavia, we once again publicly express our support for the work of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the body set up to try those responsible for such atrocities. The criminal tribunals have played a pivotal role in the strengthening of the rule of law and the promotion of long-term stability and reconciliation, and since their inception, they have been a vital tool for tackling impunity and ensuring that the perpetrators of the most serious international crimes do not escape justice. They have also paved the way for creating jurisprudence that serves as a source of inspiration for all national and international courts that are responsible or will be responsible for trying individuals accused of those crimes.

In conclusion, we reiterate our call on all parties to redouble their efforts to maintain their resolve and political courage, to build confidence and to develop their capacity to work together in the framework of international law, which are key elements of a just and lasting solution that redounds to the benefit of the parties and the entire region.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I want to thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina for his briefing. We have taken due note of it and of the content of his quarterly report (S/2016/395, annex). I would like to reaffirm to Mr. Valentin Inzko Spain's support for his work and the work of his Office.

As a State member of European Union, Spain aligns itself fully with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

Twenty years have elapsed since the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed, which gives us an opportunity to evaluate the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a certain perspective in order to assess the success stories and progress that has been made, as well as the challenges that remain. We have taken note of the High Representative's assessment of the country's achievements in the last quarter towards compliance with the five objectives and two conditions established for the completion of his mandate and the closure of his Office. We reiterate our appeal to all political stakeholders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to redouble their efforts and continue to progress towards the achievement of all these objectives as soon as possible.

We very much welcome the positive role being played by the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea, which is supporting the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in maintaining security and contributing to their training and capacity-building. In the current context, the mission remains a necessary element in guaranteeing the country's stability. Moreover, we reiterate our full support for the work of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and its Residual Mechanism. We hope that their decisions and rulings will not be exploited along partisan lines by certain groups for the purpose of further exacerbating the tensions in the country.

Over the past six months, there has been a positive political environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which, at the international level, has led to greater dialogue and cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries, as evidenced in the border treaty with Montenegro. On the domestic level, this positive political environment has led to concrete reforms that allow Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue on its path towards full integration with the European Union.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership to the European Union is a very positive sign and needs to be assessed on its own merit, since, as I said, much remains to be done, such as continuing to implement the mechanism of interinstitutional coordination, adapting it to the Stabilization and Association Agreement and carrying out the reform agenda. We remain convinced that headway in all these areas will have a positive impact and lead to concrete improvements in the lives of all the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the country's socioeconomic situation.

Among the pending issues that still need to be resolved is the publication of the results of the 2013 census, which is key to ensuring the smooth political functioning of the country. Of equal importance are the situation of Mostar and the attitude of the Republika Srpska authorities, as has been pointed out by the High Representative, with regard to such problems as the refusal to move ahead in registering State properties located on its territory

We are concerned about the divisive rhetoric of some political leaders and representatives, in particular of the Republika Srpska, where they continue to wield the threat of a referendum, which poses a real challenge to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country and jeopardizes the system established by the Dayton Peace Accords. We must not lose sight of the fact that the political stability of the entire region depends to a large extent on the stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Spain continues wholeheartedly to support the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We also uphold the need for the political leaders of the country to respect the rule of law and the principle of equality in all their actions. That principle is an indispensable element not only of peaceful coexistence in the country, but also for constructive and cooperative relations with neighbouring countries. Respect for that principle is the only way that Bosnia and Herzegovina can make headway in its European integration process.

Ms. Schwalger (New Zealand): I thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing.

Since the Council last discussed the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (see S/PV.7555), it has taken the significant step of lodging an application for membership in the European Union (EU). We wish Bosnia and Herzegovina well as it pursues an ambitious reform agenda, with a view to closer integration with the EU. The reform process will undoubtedly encounter

challenges and give rise to difficult choices. But it is clear that this programme of modernization will enable all citizens to reap the benefit of economic growth and strengthened institutions. The reforms also aim to increase employment opportunities, which is particularly important for youth, who are looking to contribute to a vibrant and prosperous society. We encourage the international community, especially neighbours in the region and the EU, to support Bosnia and Herzegovina in its reform process. With a reform agenda laying out a path forward, it is time for all political actors to look for ways to deliver it, and not to step backwards into divisive politics that have impeded socioeconomic progress for all of its citizens.

It is now over 20 years since the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina brought an end to the bitter conflict in the region. But, as we have seen in the Security Council over the past year, the wounds of the past are yet to fully heal. We urge renewed commitment by the parties and the international community to engage on the issues left unresolved by the Dayton Peace Agreement as they continue the process of national reconciliation.

Divisive rhetoric and talk of referendims challenge Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the Dayton Peace Agreement. That does nothing to move the country forward, and instead detracts from the reform agenda and undermines reconciliation efforts. The reconciliation process requires due consideration of past events and, where appropriate, holding individuals to account. We hope that everyone can learn to respect the conclusions of independent judicial processes, whatever their outcome. When court decisions are used as justification for inflammatory language and provocative actions, it simply sets reconciliation backwards. The process of administering justice should instead be used as an opportunity to move forward together. Not only should judicial decisions be respected, the judiciary itself should be able to operate freely with independence. We reiterate the High Representative's call for the judiciary to be left to prosecute and rule on cases free from political pressure, but fully in line with principles of professionalism and accountability.

As we have heard today, in the reporting period only limited progress was made on the objectives and conditions necessary for the closure of the Office of the High Representative. We hope that progress on that track can accelerate. We welcome the ongoing work of the EU-led multinational stabilization force in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which continues to play an important role in supporting the local authorities in maintaining a safe and secure environment. While the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina is, as it should be, in the hands of its citizens, the international community, including the Council, has a responsibility to encourage and support it.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his briefing this morning.

It is crucial that we uphold the commitment to full compliance with the provisions of the 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and ensure full compliance with all efforts aimed at promoting peace and stability for Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that regard, Uruguay supports the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We also support the need to respect the rule of law in all actions of political leaders in the country.

We note with concern that the forty-ninth report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2016/395, annex) indicates that little progress has been made in achieving the five objectives and two conditions still pending, as established by the Steering Board, that are required for the closure of the Office of the High Representative — known as the 5+2 agenda. In that connection, we urge that the process move forward under more favourable conditions in the coming months so that the 5+2 agenda can be fully implemented through compromise by all parties.

Uruguay rejects all terrorist attacks, such as took place in Rajlovac, on the outskirts of Sarajevo, on 18 November 2015, which cost the lives of two soldiers of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are also concerned about continuing incidents that risk undermining inter-ethnic relations.

We also take note of positive developments. We welcome the fact that the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Economic Relations oversaw the full implementation of their obligations flowing from the Subregional Arms Control Agreement, in line with article IV, annex 1-B of the Dayton Peace Accord. We also welcome the fact that the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina has adopted

decisions on the destruction of certain munitions and explosive devices that have been stored in military facilities. We particularly highlight the ratification of the border demarcation agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, especially as this is the first such agreement to be ratified with a neighbouring country. We hope that during 2016 Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue along this course of positive developments, thus generating trust in stability.

Uruguay believes that the presence of the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea is a guarantee for the political and security stability of the country. It is essential that the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to cooperate fully with the Office of the High Representative until the end of his mandate, commensurate with the requirements of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Uruguay hopes to see a stable Bosnia and Herzegovina in which all communities can coexist peacefully and harmoniously.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My country welcomes your initiative, Mr. President, to organize this debate on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and would like to thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the outstanding quality of his report (S/2016/395, annex). My delegation would also like to assure him of its full support for the work that he and his Office are currently undertaking on the ground.

More than 20 years after the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina continues, despite a number of persistent difficulties, on its path towards reunification and the building of a solid nation.

My delegation would like to note some of the progress made by the country, in particular in terms of the implementation of the reforms approved by the authorities, which have started to bear fruit and give rise to new hope. I am referring, to mention just some of that progress, to Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for European Union membership, the efforts of the Bosnian authorities aimed at transferring to the State assets and property designated as defence property, as well as the adoption of labour legislation. Of course, those efforts need to be consolidated.

However, that progress should not lead us to forget the fragile nature of the situation in the country and the region. There are still causes for concern. I would like to refer to the difficulties that the authorities seem to face in certain areas, such as the publication of the 2013 census results, the European coordination mechanism, the implementation of the decision of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court on Mostar, as well as the follow-up to the requests of the International Monetary Fund. Other causes for concern include the decision made to hold a referendum, which clearly jeopardizes the sovereignty and integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the calls made by a number of Republika Srpska officals for the secession of that entity.

Other developments that threaten the sovereignty and integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina have been observed, including the ongoing questioning of the authority of the judicial authorities of the State. The refusal by the principal authorities of Republika Srpska to implement the decision of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court regarding the unconstitutionality of the provisions of the Republika Srpska law on holidays is one of several examples of that.

For all of those reasons, my delegation would like to reaffirm its commitment to respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as guaranteed by the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country's Constitution and international law.

Turning now to another area, counter-terrorism is one of the acute challenges facing Bosnia and Herzegovina, in a context where complex migration flows and the return of foreign terrorist fighters are likely to generate additional risks for the security of the country. It goes without saying that tangible results will not be achieved in that fight without the necessary strengthening, at all levels, of cooperation between the authorities.

Senegal also welcomes the outstanding work carried out by the European Union Special Representative in the promotion and implementation of the reconstruction programme, as well as the socioeconomic programmes involving cooperation between the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. Along those same lines, my delegation welcomes the interest shown by the European Union in continuing its military operation through the multinational stabilization force in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the support of the Security Council, which authorized the extension of its mandate by 12 months.

Furthermore, as underscored in the report of the High Representative, the presence in the country of the European Union military mission with an executive mandate remains crucial. Nevertheless, we believe that the international community should continue to support the efforts of Bosnia and Herzegovina to develop greater resilience in the face of socioeconomic challenges. What is at stake here is the strengthening of the security and defence forces of the country, one of the priorities of the mandate of the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR). We encourage EUFOR to continue its support, which in the long term will enable the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina to fill a number of strategic and operational gaps.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage the European Union to continue its reform programme for the restoration of peace, social cohesion and State authority in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I reaffirm the unreserved support of Senegal for the work accomplished by the High Representative.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to welcome Mr. Inzko, High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is with a great deal of attention that we have familiarized ourselves with Mr. Inzko's report to the Security Council (see S/2016/395, annex) and listened to his briefing today. However, we must be candid. The assessments that he made do not promote national reconciliation in that long-suffering country. That is quite unfortunate, as national reconciliation and the promotion of a mutually respectful relationship among the country's peoples are today gaining key importance given the challenges faced by Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Once again, we are forced to note that the High Representative's report is far from being objective and balanced in nature. It merely notes that there are problems in Bosnian society, without attempting to understand their essence or the objective reasons for which they have emerged. We hope that in the future the High Representative will — to a greater extent — focus on assessments of the implementation of his mandate and the activity of the structure that was entrusted to him during the reporting period, and that he will limit himself strictly to the issues having to do with Dayton.

Moreover, we expect the High Representative to bear in mind and be respectful of the views of all of the peoples of that State. That is why we consider inappropriate for him to present his views with regard to his support for the activities of a number of specialized bodies in Bosnia and Herzegovina dealing with the fulfilment of the criteria required for the country to launch the programme of action leading to NATO membership. In pushing the NATO topic, Mr. Inzko is acting counter to his basic task, which is to seek unifying factors for the country. In fact, he is siding with but a part of Bosnian society. As is well known, there are other views in the country — ones that are far from being in favour of NATO membership.

We also believe that the topic of reallocating defence property is one that should be considered exclusively as one of the conditions for winding down the mechanism of the High Representative. It should be considered in an unbiased way, as it is intrinsically linked to the broader issue of civilian versus State property. He should — not just in words, but in fact — promote inter-Bosnian dialogue. That, after all, is the last open point on the 5+2 agenda. He should take more seriously the political agreements that were reached back in 2012 among the leaders of the country's main parties.

That is also true of Euro-integration-related aspects. It would seem that, although a decision was made to split the two mandates in 2011, the High Representative continues to combine his position with that of the European Union Special Representative. A great many here today referred to the problem of Mostar. In that regard, it would seem that everyone has simply forgotten that it was interference by one of Mr. Inzko's predecessors that led to the impasse around the prospect of forming a multi-ethnic society in the city.

It is important that the report refer to the growing threat of Islamic extremism facing Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are convinced that that is one of the most serious problems and should, in the future, be featured as one of the key elements in the reports of the High Representative, whose task it is to fully promote the efforts of the competent bodies and organs in Bosnia and Herzegovina involved in combating terrorism, and to promote their cooperation with partner agencies in neighbouring countries and international agencies.

The problem of terrorism presents yet another strong argument in favour of a unifying agenda. It is necessary to focus on strengthening inter-agency coordination for counter-terrorism purposes. Instead of that, the High Representative continues to focus

on imaginary challenges to the Dayton Agreement, in an unjustified way, laying almost all responsibility for every problem in the stabilization process on the Bosnian Serbs. His discussion of the recent verdict of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia with regard to *Karadžić* and *Šešelj* reveals a similar approach. We believe that in that situation it would have been good for the High Representative to distance himself from his personal feelings, which would undoubtedly help the members of the Security Council to form an objective picture of the processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that respect, we urge our colleagues in the Council, as we have done before, to familiarize themselves carefully with the latest report of the leadership of Republika Srpska on their implementation of the Dayton Agreement, which includes a great deal of useful information and constructive considerations for making progress on a settlement in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We would like to especially emphasize the undesirability of any interference by the High Representative in discussions on the sensitive topic of reforming the Constitutional Court in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Attempts by the High Representative to preserve the current situation, where the last word in that key body lies with foreign justices, are counterproductive. It is important that the Bosnian parties, without foreign interference and without pressure or threats, be able to reach agreement on new parameters for membership in the Constitutional Court, alongside the agreements already achieved on clarifying the modalities for the operation of the Court and the Prosecutor's Office, which would substantially contribute to overcoming the palpable crisis of confidence in the common Bosnian justice system.

Let us turn now to the positive. We believe that it is useful to acknowledge the joint steps taken by the leadership of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to forge intergovernmental cooperation, including the first joint session of the Government of Serbia and the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, held in November 2015, as well the visit by the Head of the Government of Serbia, Mr. Vučić, to the Investment Development Conference in Srebrenica. The parties are quite capable of coexisting if no one interferes, and they can promote national reconciliation.

Mindful of all those factors, we are in favour of a further reduction in the budget and personnel of the Office of the High Representative, based on the fact that the path towards transferring responsibility for the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Bosnians themselves is by now well justified and must continue to be appropriately reflected in the methods of action of the international presence. The time for protectorates is long gone. Under the current conditions, we consider the use by High Representative of his extraordinary authority under the "Bonn Powers" to be unacceptable. There can be no alternative to inter-Bosnian dialogue, free of external pressure. The creation of conditions for advancing such dialogue and for the search by the Bosnian parties of mutually acceptable options for reforms based on the Dayton principles is the priority task for the international community.

Consolidating Bosnia and Herzegovina and ensuring the functionality of its central structures will be successful only if they are the result of consensus among the three constituent peoples. That, I believe, is an axiom.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in that country. It was very encouraging to hear from him that the martial art of karate serves as a means of uniting the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

More than 20 years have passed since the brutal war in Bosnia and Herzegovina came to an end. The prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina is critical, not only for its future but also for the peace and stability of the Western Balkans region. Japan, as a member of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board, has continuously supported the country's reconstruction and State-building efforts for two decades.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is now at an important juncture. The country has made the transition from war to peace, but the question is whether the country can achieve lasting peace and a successful future. In that regard, Japan is seriously concerned about the decision of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska to hold a referendum on secession. Such a referendum would constitute a breach of the Dayton Agreement. It would also undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although the President of Republika Srpska stated publicly that the referendum has been put aside, the National Assembly's decision has not been repealed. Furthermore, the President has continued to make public statements referring to

the Republika Srpska's independence. Japan urges all political leaders to refrain from any divisive rhetoric.

Japan warmly congratulates Bosnia and Herzegovina on its application to join the European Union, which it submitted in February. We hope that that will present an opportunity for the country to make further progress on the reforms needed for greater integration.

Before concluding, I would like to reassure the Security Council of Japan's strong support for High Representative Inzko and his Office. In the light of the importance of the role of the High Representative, Japan has been underwriting 10 per cent of the entire budget of his Office for 20 years. The visit of the High Representative to Japan in January was appreciated by the Japanese authorities. I wish Mr. Inzko every success so that outstanding objectives and conditions necessary for the closure of his Office can be achieved at an early date.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Egypt.

At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his comprehensive briefing to the Security Council on his recent report (S/2016/841, annex) on the implementation of the Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Egypt reiterates its full support for Mr. Inzko's efforts.

Twenty years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, which brought to an end one of the most brutal conflicts in the world, Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to face a number of critical political challenges. Egypt would like to express its concern that efforts to deal with those challenges remain insufficiently backed by a comprehensive consensus among the different political stakeholders in the country. Egypt warns that the failure to address those challenges may undermine some of the achievements made at the political level since the signing of the Dayton Agreement.

In that respect, Egypt stresses that the Dayton Agreement will remain the cornerstone for efforts to bring peace to the region, which is the sole basis for stability in the country.

In that respect, Egypt stresses that the divisive rhetoric and calls by some stakeholders and political parties that have called for the secession of Republika Srpska from Bosnia and Herzegovina constitute serious threats to the political process as a whole. It may also have a spillover effect on the entire Balkan region.

We therefore call on all political leaders to put the common interests of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina above narrow ethnic and political interests, which undermine opportunities for progress and stability. In that regard, Egypt emphasizes the importance of all parties respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as all decisions taken by its judicial authorities and the mechanisms of international justice, and to prevent any negative impact on the political process in Bosnia and Herzegovina or its regional relations.

Moreover, we cannot separate internal developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the larger context of the Balkan region as a whole. We therefore stress the importance of building good-neighbourly relations, mutual trust, positive and constructive dialogue, and enhanced regional cooperation in order to establish peace and stability in all countries of the region.

The economic challenges facing Bosnia and Herzegovina require the international community to mobilize its efforts to promote the achievement of an economic leap forward that could contribute to creating a domestic environment conducive to stability. We stress once again the importance of regional cooperation in attaining such progress, and call on the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to pursue their efforts to overcome the political obstacles to economic growth by enhancing the political participation of all citizens without discrimination, encompassing all national groups irrespective of their ethnic background. We affirm Egypt's full support for the efforts of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina in fighting terrorism and its readiness to provide all forms of assistance in countering extremist ideologies, in particular violent, radical religious rhetoric, and in correcting religious misconceptions.

In conclusion, we reiterate the importance, now more than ever before, for all people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to strive to affirm the principles of social coexistance and political agreement and to move ahead on the path to peace. This enterprise must be undertaken in parallel with genuine regional and international support.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Vukašinović (Bosnia and Herzegovina): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May, and to wish you and your delegation every success. We welcome Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Implementation of the Peace Agrement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, and we have taken note of his forty-ninth report (S/2016/395, annex), covering the period from 22 October 2015 to 15 April 2016.

During the reporting period, Bosnia and Herzegovina continued its steady work on implementing its socioeconomic reforms. Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities at all levels have coordinated their efforts in ensuring that all concrete measures necessary to successful reforms are put in place. There is a common understanding that refining the legal and fiscal framework and creating an environment more attractive to investment is essential to economic growth and creating new jobs.

Bosnia and Herzegovina successfully chaired the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the largest and oldest European political organization, comprising 47 member States. During our chairmanship, we successfully accomplished all our priorities and coordinated the response of the Council of Europe to the refugee crisis at its peak. Furthermore, the chairmanship of Bosnia and Herzegovina facilitated the process of opening for signature the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention for the Prevention of Terrorism, which focuses on the problem of the foreign fighters.

Following the significant progress made on the implementation of the reform agenda, Bosnia and Herzegovina submitted its application for membership to the European Union on 15 February. The submission of the application of Bosnia and Herzegovina was a concrete result of the new approach of the European Union towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. We thank the European Union and its member States for their strong support for Bosnia and Herzegovina's European perspective. On its part, Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to work to implement its reforms, improve the economy, and strengthen the rule of law and good governance.

The economic and fiscal situation of the country has been under influence of the global economic slowdown. However, in the first three quarters of 2015 industrial production increased by 2.5 per cent and the inflation rate stood at 0.8 per cent, which means that consumer prices fell slightly in comparison to the previous year.

The advancement of friendly and constructive cooperation among the countries of the region in areas of mutual interest is one of main priorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to pay special attention to strengthening cooperation with countries of the region. There is a common agreement among Western Balkan States that collaboration in the field of transportation and energy is the most important area for economic growth.

The International Economic Fair Mostar 2016, held from 12 to 16 April, , was a great opportunity to further bolster regional cooperation. During that event, members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina held a number of bilateral meetings with regional leaders and leaders of neighbouring States, including the President of Croatia, the President of Montenegro, the Prime Minster of Serbia, the President of Slovakia and the Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey.

Bosnia and Herzegovina stands committed to fully cooperating with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, as well as to continue processing war crimes before domestic courts. We reiterate that fighting impunity at the local level is vital to Bosnia and Herzegovina as a complex and multinational State. In that regard, implementing the national strategy for processing war crimes, regardless of the national or religious origins of perpetrators or victims, is essential to reconciliation and long-term stability.

Terrorism, radicalization and violent extremism constitute one of the main security challenges at the global, regional and national levels. Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with the provisions of its amended penal code, continues to process individuals involved in fighting on behalf of terrorist and paramilitary organizations, as well as those facilitating the recruitment of terrorist fighters.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's judicial and security institutions continue to implement our strategy for preventing and combating terrorism. The strategy, alongside security measures, includes preventive activities for deradicalization undertaken by national stakeholders, including religious communities,

educational institutions, civil society organizations and media. We would also like to underline that during the reporting period, Bosnia and Herzegovina made significant progress in combating organized crime, corruption and money-laundering. Bosnia and Herzegovina, supported by the European Union, has introduced a regional initiative on the prevention of terrorism and the illicit arms trade. The main goal of the initiative is to establish a database of individuals who constitute a security threat, as well as a regional network for the prevention of arms smuggling from the countries of the Western Balkans.

It is evident that flows of refugees and migrants through the Balkans will continue to pose significant challenges to the States of the region and their instituions. Thus far, Bosnia and Herzegovina has not been under pressure from the significant movement of migrants through its territory. Nevertheless, Bosnia and Herzegovina's institutions have undertaken a set of comprehensive measures, including in the humanitarian and security fields, in the event of a massive influx of refugees. We believe that only extensive and coordinated actions at the global level to address the underlying causes of migration in countries of origin can serve to bring about a satisfactory solution to the migrant crisis.

Lastly, I wish to express the unwavering commitment of Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities to continue to work steadily towards building a better future for its citizens. I would also like to thank our international partners for their continued support to Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country that has travelled a long way from being a security consumer to becoming a police and military contributor to United Nation peacekeeping missions worldwide.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vrailas: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Montenegro and Albania, as well as Ukraine, align themselves with this statement.

I join other speakers in welcoming High Representative Valentin Inzko back to the Security Council and in assuring him of the European Union's continued support. I also welcome the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina and thank him for his statement.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been subject to discussion in the Council for more than two decades. Over that period, we have witnessed an important transformation in the nature of these discussions, reflecting the strengthened stability and progress in the areas of democracy, the rule of law and socio-economic development in the country. The Council has contributed greatly to the advancements seen since the end of the armed conflict in 1995.

Today Bosnia and Herzegovina is actively contributing to United Nations missions, gradually transforming from the role of the security consumer to that of security provider. The country held a seat among the Council's members and took its share of responsibility for global peace and security. At the same time, the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the Residual Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals, supported by the local judicial authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries of the region, are continuing to try to bring the perpetrators of war crimes to justice, and peace to their victims

The European perspective of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a central driver in overcoming challenges on the ground and in mobilizing citizens and their elected representatives behind the necessary political and socioeconomic reforms. A great majority of the country's citizens strongly desire that Bosnia and Herzegovina advance in its European aspirations. On 15 February, the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina submitted the country's application for membership of the European Union. The European Union welcomed that as a broad and unequivocal expression of the country's commitment to continue its efforts along the EU path. The application follows a further deepening of the political dialogue with the European Union in 2015. That reaffirms the true and lasting commitment and engagement of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Together with our international partners, including the international financial institutions, the European Union continues to invest in Bosnia and Herzegovina's reforms. Those joint efforts support domestic stability and lay the foundation for future prosperity for all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has been a long-shared goal of the European Union and that of the Council.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities, with the support of the European Union and its international partners, have developed, agreed and are implementing the most comprehensive package of socioeconomic reforms that the country has seen in its recent history. Those efforts require a serious commitment and a readiness to make difficult political decisions in overcoming the long legacy of underinvestment, lack of structural reforms and burdensome administrative difficulties. Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to re-energize its economy and make it more competitive. Meaningful progress in that regard is needed and will enable the Council of the European Union to decide on the next steps along Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU path.

The overall positive momentum on the ground, however, continues to face important challenges flowing from the persisting political divisions and inefficient administrative and decision-making structures. In anticipation of the municipal elections to be held in October, we call for avoiding divisive agendas and rhetoric, as that might weaken the positive momentum and introduce inefficiency in decision-making at a time when the country needs to mobilize all its resources behind reforms.

Particular concerns have been raised by the intentions of the leadership of Republika Srpska to hold various referendums. Such political initiatives distract attention from the mounting socioeconomic difficulties, blurring the responsibility of the local authorities, and have strong potential to undermine the stability. Citizens will see through those actions, and their elected representatives, whom they entrusted to address those issues, will be held accountable. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all parties involved to reach an agreement as soon as possible on how to implement the electoral requirements to allow for elections in Mostar in October.

Reconciliation needs to advance broadly among the citizens and the political leadership representing their interests. To succeed, the country needs to move forward united. The European Union reiterates its unequivocal commitment to the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and united country, as well as to Bosnia and Herzegovina's European Union prospect.

The European Union will continue to use all available instruments to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's stability and progress. The overall security situation has remained relatively calm and stable, yet stability has not been fully entrenched. In that regard, the European Union confirms its decision to maintain its presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including through the executive mandate of the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea, while focusing on capacity-building and training.

As the country's stability continues to strengthen and further progress is achieved in reforms and on the EU path, the European Union will be looking forward to continuing the discussion with the international community on the reconfiguration of the international presence. We will do so in the appropriate forum. In that regard, the European Union calls on the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to meet the outstanding objectives and the conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has made notable progress since the last discussion in the Council (see S/P.7555). Its European perspective drives the reforms in the country and contributes to overall stability and development. Political divisions remain, including across ethnic lines, and require continued focus and efforts by the international community, using appropriate tools. The European Union looks forward to the continued support of the Council in its role in guiding and assisting Bosnia and Herzegovina towards peace, stability and prosperity for all its citizens.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): Let me start by joining other speakers in welcoming High Representative Valentin Inzko. I would also like to express our appreciation for his briefing and for his comprehensive report (S/2016/395, annex), as well as for his hard work and dedication in carrying out his important mandate.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the observer of the European Union (EU). I would like to make several remarks in my national capacity.

Croatia regularly participates in the Security Council's semi-annual debates on Bosnia and Herzegovina. We do so not only for the obvious and self-explanatory reasons — that we are a neighbouring country and a friend of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Equally important reasons for our engagement include the fact that Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina are one

of the three constituent peoples and that Croatia, as a signatory to the Dayton Peace Agreement, has a special responsibility towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. For all those reasons, the importance Croatia attaches to the territorial integrity, stability and functionality of Bosnia and Herzegovina is of the highest degree.

We have stated on many occasions, and we shall repeat it today: Bosnia and Herzegovina is an important European country that deserves a secure and prosperous future, and, Croatia, being the only member State that directly borders Bosnia and Herzegovina, stands ready to render it our full support and assistance.

The new Croatian Government is fully committed to continuing to provide Croatia's strong support to Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina was the first country that the new Croatian Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, Mr Miro Kovač, visited after coming into office in January. Also, a joint session of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina is planned to take place in the near future in order to further strengthen our cooperation and relations.

As we discuss today developments in the reporting period, I wish to address three points that are of particular importance to us: European integration; the territorial integrity, stability and functionality of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and united country; and accountability and reconciliation.

On the first point, Croatia has been a strong supporter of the Euro-Atlantic integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, we welcome fully and strongly support Bosnia and Herzegovina's submission of its EU membership application in February. There is no doubt that the European integration process is creating an atmosphere conducive to the internal consolidation and modernization of the country.

The new EU approach has so far proven effective and is yielding results. It has helped inject new energy into the country's reform process and EU path. The focus on the reform agenda, in particular positive efforts to advance economic and social reforms, has enabled the country to emerge from its deep stagnation. Croatia will continue to advocate for a strong and permanent focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina at the EU level and beyond. Bosnia and Herzegovina is at an important crossroads now and its political leadership should spare no effort to seize this positive momentum to move forward and implement much-needed reforms aimed at improving the socioeconomic situation and ensuring the overall prosperity of all its citizens.

Secondly, the territorial integrity, stability and functionality of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and unified country are of paramount importance to Croatia. This is also a fundamental prerequisite for the stability and prosperity of all of South-East Europe and the entire European continent. The specific and complex political system rooted in the Dayton Peace Agreement is in many aspects based on ethnic representation, which should rest on genuine equality among the three constituent peoples. This equality is the key element for achieving the stability and functionality of the country. We are therefore deeply concerned about continued secessionist rhetoric, ideas and actions coming from Republika Srpska. This is unacceptable and highly disruptive for the reform agenda and the overall stability and progress of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country's future must not be held hostage by a single entity.

We note that decision of the members of the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska to call a referendum on the authority of the High Representative, the Court and the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina was not acted upon, but we regret that this decision of June 2015 has not yet been repealed. We are afraid that the Republika Srpska's political leadership may once again pursue divisive agendas in the context of the October municipal elections. This highly controversial decision has had a detrimental effect to the sovereignty and integrity of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It violates the Dayton Peace Agreement and has a strong potential to undermine the stability of the country and the wider region. We must not be silent about it; on the contrary, such conduct should be condemned in clear and definite terms.

Thirdly, with regard to accountability and reconciliation, in late March the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia delivered the long-awaited verdict in the case against Radovan Karadžić. The Tribunal found him guilty of genocide, crimes against humanity and violations of the laws or customs of war committed by the Serb forces during the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The verdict came 20 years after the war, during which unspeakable atrocities, such as the genocide in Srebrenica, were committed. Although Karadžić was sentenced to 40 years of imprisonment, for the victims and their families it will take much more than this verdict to heal the

wounds. Much more will be needed to achieve genuine reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and beyond. For that, not only the criminal has to be put behind the bars, but also his genocidal and criminal policy.

We sincerely hope that more than 20 years after the war and its horrors, Bosnia and Herzegovina is firmly on the path towards a better, more prosperous, secure and stable future. We firmly believe that this future for Bosnia and Herzegovina lies within the community of the European Union and NATO States. We are looking towards the days when the biggest stories coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina will not be about war crimes and suffering, or about irresponsible politicians threatening the very existence of the country they are supposed to serve, but stories like the one I would like to conclude my statement with — a story about a bike trail.

Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have launched a joint project, funded by the EU, on the revitalization of an old railway route — a 200-kilometre railway track linking Dubrovnik, on the Croatian coastline, with the mountainous hinterland of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This historic route, which navigates through a very beautiful landscape, will be turned into a long-distance cycling track, thereby earning tourist income for the local populations on both sides of the border. This is where our joint future lies — in things and endeavours that connect us, together with our joint European destiny.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Mr. Milanović (Serbia): First of all, allow me to wish Egypt a very successful presidency and to thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting. I willl High Representative Inzko back to the United Nations. Since I am speaking last, I thank all previous speakers for their statements.

The Republic of Serbia is firmly committed to promoting comprehensive bilateral relations with its neighbours and invests continuous efforts in creating conditions for a new kind and quality of relations in the Western Balkans and South-East Europe. As a next-door neighbour, Bosnia and Herzegovina is the key partner of my country in the pursuit of this important goal. The possibilities, as well as the need and interests, are there; what we need to do, however, is to mobilize additional resources and renew our energies to bring about a better future for all our peoples. The Government of Serbia and Prime Minister Vučić in particular, have launched a number of initiatives recently, making important breakthroughs in cooperation with partners from Bosnia and Herzegovina and bringing us ever closer to the common goal of each and every responsible government in the region — reconciliation, mutual trust, faster economic development and European Union (EU) integration.

More than 20 years have elapsed since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, which put an end to the killing and devastation wrought by a tragic conflict and brought peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Agreement, which is in its third decade of implementation, was an important stepping stone in the process of reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the entire region. It provided a basis for restoring trust among its constituent peoples and entities, which is crucially important for the country's future at this point in time as well. And although it is always possible to do more, significant results have been achieved in the consolidation of society, economic development and the cooperation of Bosnia and Herzegovina with its neighbours and in its integration efforts, which, not unlike elsewhere in the region, are expected to have a catalytic effect on its road to full EU membership.

As a guarantor of the Dayton Agreement, Serbia has made every effort to be the best possible neighbour to Bosnia and Herzegovina; after all, relations between the two countries have a ripple effect on the entire region. Abiding strictly by the provisions of the Dayton Agreement, my country is firmly committed to preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for it is only in conditions of full stability that Bosnia and Herzegovina can be a neighbour whose pace of development will continue to rise and constituent peoples will enjoy a better quality of life tomorrow than they do today. We believe that, as the homeland of many Serbs as well, Bosnia and Herzegovina stands at the cusp of a better future, that its regional integration will tighten and that its infrastructure, its economy and effective administration will continue to develop as it progresses along the road to European integration.

Dialogue and agreements among the two entities and the three constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina stand out as the most important values and achievements of more than two decades of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Aimed at reaching consensus, they are the only proper and effective instruments for addressing the issues relevant for the present and future

of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Always at a premium, dialogues are particularly important in times of reform when we seek to fulfil the criteria and reach the standards in the process of European integrations, as they help us bridge the differences that sometimes shape our vies and positions. Proceeding from its own experience and the experiences of others, my country is convinced that Bosnia and Herzegovina and its political actors have the will and energy to achieve, through mutual agreements, solutions that will benefit and be acceptable to all. Such agreements and their implementation will help improve the understanding and trust among the Serbs, Bosniacs and Croats and energize and provide additional impetus to the European integration and reform processes.

We have been witness to a number of divergent views and opinions in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the past period. Serbia considers them to be internal issues, best addressed by agreements among its political actors within the existing legal system of the country, in an atmosphere of constructiveness and mutual respect.

My country has initiated a number of political dialogues at the highest level, aimed at promoting the development of a wide range of bilateral relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina. A joint session was held between the Government and Serbia and the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo last November. Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić took part in the Business Investment Forum at Srebrenica on 11 November 2015, and the Government of Serbia allocated sizeable financial resources, in the overall amount of €5 million, to help carry out the projects important for the town of Srebrenica and the surrounding area. In view of the tragic events that took place at Srebrenica and the suffering of that and many other towns and villages in Bosnia and Herzegovina, my country believes that partnership aimed at reaching reconciliation and creating a better future is the best platform for the promotion of good-neighbourly relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina. On 12 April, Prime Minister Vučić visited Mostar for the opening of the Mostar Economic Fair, where he met all the members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Republic of Serbia is ready to continue to work not only on maintaining but also on promoting the achievements made in cooperation with the central Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which it considers an important link in the quest to bring about a stable and prospe.ous Western Balkans and South-East Europe. Proceeding from the provisions of the Dayton Agreement, Serbia is also committed to furthering transparent relations with the Republic of Srpska and to cooperating and expanding cooperatibn with the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Recently, Bosnia and Herzegovina submitted an official request for admission to the European Union. Serbia welcomes that step and expresses its readiness to share its experience from the negotiation process. Bilateral European Union integration consultations with Bosnia and Herzegovina were held at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia last February. On that occasion, the interlocutors from Bosnia and Herzegovina were handed a copy of Serbia's replies to the questionnaire of the European Commission, which we hope will help Bosnia and Herzegovina in its next step on its own road to Europe. Although the two sides may be at different stages of the process, they actively support one another and exchange views and experiences, for which the memorandum of understanding provides a convenient framework.

It is in my country's ongoing interest to promote economic cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that context, we are pleased to note that the level of the cooperation and the scope of trade are increasing year in, year out. In 2015, trade exchange amounted to €1.441 billion and, with about €900 million in investments, Serbia is one of the largest investors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including in the areas of infrastructure, energy and joint ventures.

Serbia is firmly committed to promoting reconciliation and working towards a better future for all peoples of the region. Relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, my country's first neighbour, its stability and prosperity are of paramount importance. We are ready to intensify our contacts and cooperation and to invest additional efforts in pursuit of peace, security and a better future, to which all peoples of the region are entitled and which they well deserve.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7689

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7689th meeting
Friday, 6 May 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Aboulatta	(Egypt)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	France	Mrs. Audouard
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marachesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Tenth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2016/372)

Third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 2233 (2015) (S/2016/396)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Tenth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2016/372)

Third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 2233 (2015) (S/2016/396)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Iraq to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Kubiš, who is joining today's meeting via video teleconference from Baghdad.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/372, which contains the tenth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013), as well as to document S/2016/396, which contains the third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 2233 (2015).

I now give the floor to Mr. Kubiš.

Mr. Kubiš: I have the honour to present the third report S/2016/396 of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 2233 (2015), as well as the tenth report (S/2016/372) of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of resolution 2107 (2013), on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, and property.

Since my previous briefing to the Security Council (see S/PV.7623), a profound political crisis has engulfed Baghdad and the country and brought paralysis and deadlock to the work of the Government and the Council of Representatives. The failure of Iraq's Government and political class to agree and carry on genuine reforms that would improve governance and accountability and include equal justice for all, jobs and services while curbing corruption, as demanded by the Iraqi people, notably in Baghdad and southern Shiite provinces since last August, prompted the demonstrators to request reform of the whole Government and political process, abandoning the ethnic and sectarian quota approach that has been in the fundament of the Iraq political system since 2003.

In February a mix of civil-society protesters was joined by the supporters of Sayed Muqtada Al-Sadr. Spurred by that pressure, Prime Minister Al-Abadi attempted to accelerate the delivery of his reform programme and to replace the Cabinet created on the basis of party affiliation or ethnic or sectarian identity by a so-called technocratic Cabinet, requested, among others, by Al-Sadr. For the majority of Iraqi protesters, such a Cabinet is needed to enact genuine reforms, get rid of a powerful patronage system and achieve success in fighting corruption. However, the majority of Iraqi political blocs reject such a fundamental overhaul of the political process. They view such attempts as efforts to delegitimize not only the Government or the Council of Representatives, but the whole political system. Notably, they also view Al-Sadr's action as an attempt to take over the power on the back of the Shiite street.

Following months of controversy and weeks of political paralysis and split in the Council of Representatives, the promise of a solution to the political deadlock came with some new ministerial appointments at the parliamentary meeting of 26 April. Yet that hope suffered a significant setback on 30 April. Once it was clear that voting would not take place on another set of ministerial candidates, Sadrist and civil-society demonstrators breached the entry checkpoints of the Green Zone and stormed the Parliament building. Acts of vandalism and attacks on some members of Parliament, sadly, broke with the practice of many months of peaceful protests. The protesters withdrew from the Green Zone the following day, yet they pledged further action in series of escalating steps — the dismissal of the three constitutional leaders of the country, early elections culminating, if necessary, with attacks on the seat of power, civil disobedience or a general strike — unless the Government and Parliament made rapid progress on reforms. At this stage, although

the situation has calmed down, it remains unpredictable and could unfold in many different directions.

Since the beginning of the pro-reform protest movement in August 2015, the Shiite religious leadership, the Marja'iya, has backed the people's requests for political solutions to the current deep political crisis, as well as for progressive reforms in Iraq, including through the most recent statement by the Office of Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani on 4 May. In it, the Marja'iya renewed its warning to the parties against a continuation of the current course in dealing with the country's issues and its many crises and called on them to think of the future of their people and take serious and tangible steps to resolve the current situation.

I strongly urge the Government, constitutional and political leaders and civil society to work together in a constructive dialogue that will not only resolve the political impasse, but give a clear perspective of better a future for the people, which will unite them and their leaders. Maintaining focus and unity of effort in fighting the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) remains a critical priority, followed by mobilizing international assistance to help alleviate a deep economic, fiscal and humanitarian crisis, and promote stabilization and the return of internally displaced persons (IDP). A business-as-usual approach simply will not be enough for the people. They want genuine change that will improve their lives.

It is imperative to resume soon the work of the Council of Representatives and to confirm a Government that will be able and willing to promote genuine reforms. Iraq's political groups must together find a political solution based on the Constitution, the law and the principles of democracy, in order to respond to the needs of the people, put an end to the split and paralysis in Parliament and enable the rapid enactment of the necessary reforms and anti-corruption measures, and the smooth functioning of State institutions, without threat or intimidation. I also call on the Government to take specific steps to promote women's participation in politics as part of the reform process.

Despite the notable and consistent progress on the ground against ISIL, it remains a formidable and determined enemy that constantly adjusts its tactics and attack patterns, while also taking into account of developments in Syria. As the Secretary-General has advised the Council on numerous occasions, ISIL cannot be defeated by military means alone. Without addressing the root causes of violent extremism and the underlying ideology, efforts will not be sustainable or lasting. Military victories need to be complemented by support for displaced people and increased stabilization and rehabilitation efforts that prioritize the rule of law and good governance and allow for the safe return of IDPs to their places of origin. Simultaneously, Iraqis must prioritize political and community reconciliation.

The recent resumption of contacts and dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil should be turned into a genuine partnership of mutually beneficial cooperation. Reconciling differences and working together on the necessary reforms will create the conditions for enhanced financial and technical support by the international community to Iraq, including the Kurdistan region.

The visit of the Secretary-General to Iraq on 26 March, accompanied by Mr. Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank Group, and Mr. Ahmad Mohamed Ali Al-Madani, President of the Islamic Development Bank, was an illustration of the seriousness of the international community in its support for Iraq. The world must recognize that Iraq requires more, not less, international support at this critical juncture as it struggles with many challenges and to break from past legacies of poor governance and corruption. While the international community is ready to offer more support, Iraqis themselves must implement reforms that will put their country on the road to recovery.

I welcome the progress achieved during Iraq's negotiations with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which should be finalized during another round of negotiations in Amman in mid-May. Positive results will also be needed in order to promote Iraq's case at the forthcoming Group of Seven Summit in Japan.

Stabilizing newly liberated areas remains a priority, and is key to laying the groundwork for future reconciliation. The problems are immense, as shown by the example of Ramadi, with the huge challenges that are posed by the vast degree of destruction and unprecedented contamination by explosive devices. Despite the Government's warnings about the threat of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), thousands of desperate families have already returned to the city of Ramadi and its surrounding areas. We are very concerned about reports of dozens of civilian casualties

from booby-trap IEDs placed by ISIL, as well as remnant explosive devices. In close collaboration with, and under the guidance of, the national and provincial authorities on mine action, the United Nations Mine Action Service has played a role in helping to mobilize international capacities to address explosive remnants of war, including IEDs, at the local level.

I am concerned about the reports of ISIL's use of weaponized chemicals in its attacks on civilians and security force personnel, as has been happening recently in Bashir, Taza and Matar. I urge the international community to support the ongoing investigation into those incidents by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and to ensure accountability for anyone found to be involved in, or facilitating the use of, weaponized chemicals.

The humanitarian crisis in Iraq remains one of the worst in the world. The number of Iraqis in need has doubled over the past year. Nearly one third of the population, more than 10 million people, now require some form of humanitarian assistance. Depending on its scope and intensity, the military campaign will almost certainly lead to mass displacement in the months ahead. In a worst-case scenario, another more than 2 million Iraqis may be newly displaced by the end of the year. The United Nations is especially worried about humanitarian conditions in Fallujah, which remains under ISIL's control and effectively under siege. The Government is bringing to safety families that manage to reach mustering points. The humanitarian community has been mobilized to provide lifesaving support to them and to the people trapped in Fallujah.

The 2016 humanitarian response plan requests $861 million to provide lifesaving assistance to 7 million Iraqis. Disappointingly, only a quarter of that has been secured so far. Unless $300 million is received by June, dozens of front-line lifesaving programmes will be cut back or closed. The priority humanitarian plan for this year is intended to cover existing needs in the country. It does not include the additional needs included in the contingency plans for Mosul's liberation. The amount required to help those who will be affected by the military operation in Mosul will depend directly on the type of the operation. If destruction is widespread and there is mass displacement for a long period, the cost of supporting the populations will be enormous. We also need to step up human resources and funding to address the immense needs of displaced women and girls, which include specialized psychological care and education.

I would now like to turn to the tenth report (S/2016/372) of the Secretary-General on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. Iraq's Ministry of Defence has officially taken over the technical overview of the missing Kuwaiti persons file, resuming the work and undertaking a number of activities since the transition. That is an encouraging and welcome step, which I hope will add impetus to the Government of Iraq's efforts. Unfortunately, a stalemate still persists with respect to missing Kuwaiti property. In a follow-up to his visit, the Secretary-General and I visited Kuwait at the end of March, encouraging the Iraqi leadership to take every possible step to achieve tangible progress concerning the issues of both missing persons and property. In order to contribute more actively to that effort, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq will be reaching out to various stakeholders to seek their assistance with various aspects that will help to push the process forward.

However, I would like to emphasize that the main responsibility for ensuring progress lies with the Government of Iraq. While we remain cognizant of the sheer volume of challenges that Iraq is currently facing, its international obligations have to be fulfilled and that issue cannot fall by the wayside.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Kubiš for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Alhakim (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Arab Republic of Egypt on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and for its especially transparent efforts in organizing the Council's work. I would also like to thank you personally, Mr. President. And I thank the People's Republic of China for its leadership of the Council last month. I am also grateful to Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), for his briefing, and commend him and his teams in both Baghdad and New York for the outstanding service they are providing to Iraq at a difficult time.

The three leaderships — the presidency, the Speaker of Parliament and the Prime Minister — are working with the major political blocs elected by the people to implement the Prime Minister's reform programme and enact legislation in the House of Representatives, including on Government reform, the provision of public services and the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to liberated towns, with the assistance of the United Nations and donor States, which I would like to thank.

I would like to stress that 2016 is a crucial year for Iraq, with regard to combating terrorism and recovering all the territory that has been taken over by the terrorist gangs of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Iraq urges the international coalition to build on the victories that have been achieved to date in military operations and to take advantage of the weakening of the ISIL groups in order to liberate Mosul. Operations to regain control of Mosul under joint military command are in their early stages, beginning with efforts to take over surrounding villages. My Government commends the Iraqi army for the successes in Ramadi that have enabled us to retake Ramadi and Hit and continue working to clean up remaining pockets in Anbar, paving the way for IDPs to return.

Our forces are working hard to regain the cities and towns occupied by ISIL's terrorist gangs in Iraq and to reopen the road between Baghdad and Amman. In that regard, we welcome the fact that United States Secretary of State John Kerry has said that he considers ISIL's actions in Iraq to be acts of genocide and crimes against humanity, particularly those against minorities such as Yazidis, Christians and Shiite Muslims. We urge the Security Council to set up a specific international legal mechanism for investigating and bringing to justice the criminals of ISIL. We urge all States to implement the provisions of resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014), 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015), in particular the those pertaining to stopping the flow of foreign terrorist fighters from more than 100 States Members of the United Nations. We also urge them to eliminate the sources of financing and put an end to the smuggling of Iraqi oil and archaeological artefacts across the Turkish border.

The war against terrorism must be based on the principle of respect for all States, especially neighbouring States, and respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and the non-intervention in its internal affairs. We stress the Security Council's responsibility to demand that Turkey withdraw its forces, which have penetrated 110 kilometres into Iraqi territory without prior authorization from the central Iraqi Government. We consider that a flagrant violation of Iraqi sovereignty. It is also a violation of the principle of good neighbourliness and other principles of international law, as well as the Charter of the United Nations. It undermines confidence in the Security Council's role in safeguarding the principles of the Charter. Furthermore, Iraq calls on the Turkish Government to urgently withdraw its forces from Iraqi territory. We urge it to respect international law and not to base its actions on utterly unfounded pretexts.

Iraq values the positions taken by the international coalition and its participation in the efforts to regain stability and rebuild the areas recovered by Iraqi forces from the ISIL terrorist gangs. The objective is to lessen the humanitarian crisis of IDPs. It requires overcoming the dangers posed by the remnants of explosives and mines left behind by those gangs. It also requires the provision of fundamental services that are essential for the return of IDPs to those towns and regions. I would underline the effective participation by the coalition to rebuild recovered areas and to ensure that locals are able to fight and hold territory.

We thank all States participating in the international coalition, in particular the United States of America and the member States of the European Union, as well as other States outside the coalition, for their efforts in confronting terrorism and for their military and logistical assistance to Iraqi security forces, all while respecting be sovereignty and sanctity of the Iraqi territory and coordinating with our security forces. We call for further support and cooperation and coordination at the operational level. We also call for air support, the building of better capacities and the provision of military equipment required by Iraq, in particular for de-mining. We call for the exchange of information, for intelligence support and for help to develop the military capacities of our security forces.

Iraq has always been, and will remain, an important fundamental partner of the international coalition until the terrorist gangs are thrown out by Iraq and eliminated. We recognize the threat of terrorism, the need to work and coordinate and cooperate to combat such gangs in all places. We will not forget the role of friendly countries that have stood alongside us in our time of need and in our war against international terrorism.

With regard to the efforts of the Iraqi Government to promote the efforts aimed at national reconciliation, the Government has adopted a series of legislation in implementation of its national programmes, including the law on accountability and justice and the adoption of the draft law on general amnesty. The Government has also approved the national guard law, providing for the absorption of the fighters of the popular mobilization forces and the tribal members outside the Ministries of the Interior and Defence who all participated in defending Iraq and combating the terrorist ISIL gangs. The aim is to reintegrate them into the national guard in accordance with the matrix of the Iraqi armed forces.

The Iraqi Government is working to complete military and logistical requirements to retake the city of Fallujah from ISIL by opening safe corridors for the people of Fallujah towards Amiriyat, Habbaniyah and Subaihat. In order to shelter civilians who have been able to leave the city, camps have been set up with food, medical supplies and humanitarian assistance. However, ISIL is preventing people from leaving the city in order to use them as humans shields, just as they did when we retook Ramadi. Let me tell the Council that our security forces have, and continue to, allow the entry of foodstuffs and medication to Fallujah. We have never prevented that.

With regard to the Mosul dam, the Iraqi Government has taken major precautionary measures by lowering the water level in the reservoir behind the dam to 307 metres. We have called on our citizens to exercise great caution and to remain a safe distance from the dam in case it collapses. We have contracted the Italian company Trevi to repair one of the floodgates and to train Iraqi personnel to use modern technologies. Our engineers are currently undertaking that work. In that regard, Iraq appreciates the efforts of the United States of America and Italy, which are both working hard with Iraq to find a lasting and final to the problem of the dam.

Iraq is making continuing efforts to strengthen its relations with Arab other States of the region. Allow me to mention in particular Kuwait, Jordan, Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as our constant contacts with the Syrian Government. It is essential to find a speedy solution to the Syrian question. We must put an end to the humanitarian crisis in order to avoid its escalation and to find a political settlement that is satisfactory to all parties and serves to safeguard the unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian State and its international borders. That includes guarantees of non-intervention by neighbouring States and stopping the flow of terrorist fighters through Syrian borders. We appeal to the Security Council to sanction States that allow the mobilization of terrorist fighters on their land and who direct them to other States in a dirty war against humankind, stability and development. Iraq supports the United Nations and international efforts in finding a political solution that includes all Syrians, including Syria's Kurds.

The Government of Iraq is committed to making exceptional efforts aimed at achieving progress with regard to the issue of missing Kuwaiti nationals and to the national archives. The joint national committees are meeting witnesses in connection with the missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals. On 21 March, they interviewed a witness with regard to suspected burial sites holding the remains of a number of missing Kuwaiti nationals in the Al-Jahrah an Al-Khamisiyah regions. The operation to collect and document all information is ongoing.

Let me stress how deep the relationship between Iraq and Kuwait runs. We value the support of the State of Kuwait, its Prince, its Amir and its people in our war against terrorism and in providing humanitarian assistance to Iraqi internally displaced persons. Today we enjoy exceptional bilateral relations. There are joint visits and meetings of joint committees, and we welcome the increasing number of Kuwaiti tourists to holy sites in Iraq. We are also working to increase investments between our countries.

Iraq is committed to providing protection to those in temporary transit camps. We urge States to repatriate their citizens from those camps. We would like to thank Ms. Lute for her efforts at finding durable solutions.

In conclusion, let me express our thanks and appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kubiš and his team in providing advice to the Iraqi Government and for the daily efforts carried out daily by UNAMI, aimed at ensuring Iraq's unity and stability and that it is free of terrorism. We condemn the recent killing of a UNAMI staff member. In that connection, Iraqi authorities are carrying out an investigation in order to find those responsible for that murder and to bring them to justice.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Security Council has been increasingly working in open formats, occasionally in breach of earlier agreed-upon formats. I wanted to speak at this public meeting today, which, as we know, is permitted under the rules of procedure.

We are grateful to Mr. Ján Kubiš for his briefing and for having presented the report (S/2016/396) of the Secretary-General. We welcome the efforts of the United Nations and, above all those of United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). We are grateful to the Permanent Representative of Iraq for his substantive statement.

Iraq's tragedy has continued for 13 years, with significant consequences for the entire region. At this juncture, we note the need to overcome the internal political crisis as soon as possible. We understand the importance of reforming the system of State governance. However, what is most important in today's context is the task of achieving national reconciliation and joining efforts to overcome the country's problems. That can be achieved only through a broad national dialogue and agreements based on consensus among all the participants of the internal political process, while maintaining the unity and ethnic and confessional diversity of the country.

United efforts will enhance effectiveness in combating terrorist organizations. We fully support the fight of the Iraqi Government against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Lebant (ISIL). We have noted successes. However, the rapid increase in terrorist activities, in particular in Baghdad, forces us to be concerned and to question the effectiveness of the actions of the coalition, which lately, for some reason, has been referring to itself as the global coalition. Yet the area in which terrorists are active continues to expand beyond the region — into Libya, Afghanistan and Europe. We are convinced that only a comprehensive approach in combating terrorism, while strictly adhering to international legal standards, can produce the desired results. There should be no double standards. We need a consistent and principled position on the part of all members of the international community to combat this absolute evil.

We are particularly concerned about reports of ISIL using weaponized chemical agents, which the report mentions. One of those cases was reported to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Unfortunately, nothing is said about investigating such cases. Weaponized chemical agents are spreading throughout the region and are being used by terrorists. Some Member States continue to pretend that that is not happening and blame the Al-Assad regime for everything. Yet analyses of the primary chemical components of weapons seized from insurgents in Tikrit, with the subsequent identification of producers and terms of sales to other countries, show that they were in fact manufactured in Turkey or supplied to that country without the right of re-export.

In that context, our initiative on developing an international convention to combat chemical terrorism is becoming increasingly timely. They same can be said in connection with the Russian and Chinese draft resolution. We are in favour of strict respect for Iraqi sovereignty, which is regularly violated by Turkey through air strikes. Those can lead to the death of civilians, as noted in the report. Under the pretence of combating terrorists, Turkey continues to maintain a presence in the Bashiqa camp, and the protests from Baghdad are simply disregarded.

The humanitarian situation in the country is a cause for concern, in which the number of people requiring assistance is now more than in Syria. At the same time, however, the main problems with regard to humanitarian access are located in areas under the influence of terrorist organizations. The report states,

> "[h]undreds of thousands of people are ... in desperate need of assistance, with little or no opportunity to exit. Thousands of families are already caught between the front lines of opposing forces [,] and many more are likely to become so in the coming months." (*S/2016/396, para. 54*)

A catastrophic situation can be seen in Fallujah. Over the course of the so-called liberation, Ramadi was first blocked and then practically destroyed by air strikes.

Together with you, Sir, and other colleagues from Security Council — just recently during a working lunch with the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross — we discussed the fact that we are not all attaching equal importance to different situations. Some situations receive more attention than others. That is probably for political reasons. For example, every day and week, we discuss the humanitarian situation in Syria, whereas in Iraq, which is also combating a terrorist threat, the humanitarian situation is rarely the focus of our attention. That needs to be rectified, and

we should invite Mr. O'Brien to examine the situation very carefully.

In conclusion, I would like to express my wish for the people of Iraq overcome this long-running crisis as soon as possible.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Organizationf the Secretary-General Kubiš him for his briefing and want to commend him and his team for all of their efforts and operating under such difficult circumstances. I also thank the Ambassador of Iraq for his briefing this morning.

I wanted to comment on just one aspect of the intervention made by the Russian delegation. Of course, we all recognize that the terrorism of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) remains a determined and pernicious enemy in Iraq. Nearly every day, we hear of ISIL bombings in civilian areas, resulting in high numbers of casualties. The United States is a committed partner of the Iraqi Government, of the Iraqi people and, indeed, of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. Vice-President Biden strongly reaffirmed his own commitment during his recent visit to Iraq last week.

We are encouraged by the recent military progress in Anbar with the liberation of Hit and the breaking of the siege of Haditha.

But I want to note that it is important that we work together as a Council on a consensus-based appraoch. We welcome cooperation among Council members so that we can look for a constructive way to orient our work. For example, we worked together on the chemical weapons portfolio in Syria, adopting a number of very important resolutions — resolutions 2118 (2013), 2209 (2015) and 2235 (2015). We regard that success as the result of our joint productive work at the Council. I think those resolutions have removed significant amount of chemicals weapons. The resolutions condemned the use of chlorine gas as a weapon and established the Joint Investigative Mechanism. We want to keep the Mechanism focused on the use of chemical weapons by any actors in Syria.

As we look at the challenges posed by terrorism in Iraq, including the use of any such weapons by any actors, we want to look towards a constructive way of focusing on a consensus-based approach.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Egypt.

At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Ján Kubiš for his useful briefing.

Egypt would like to express its concern about the recent political developments in Iraq, in particular in view of the difficult security situation prevailing in that fraternal country. Egypt appeals to all political blocs in the Iraqi House of Representatives to respect and safeguard national institutions of the State, to unify its national vision and make every possible effort to overcome the current crisis, which could lead to a political vacuum, the repercussions of which will be felt by all groups in Iraqi society.

Egypt emphasizes the importance of supporting the three leaderships and agreeing on a comprehensive political reform programme, including, inter alia, ending the quota system and fighting corruption. The Security Council and the international community must support every effort to strengthen the concept of a national State.

We would also like to express our firm position on safeguarding the unity and sovereignty of Iraq over its national territory. We stress the pivotal importance of the Arab character of Iraqi society, but also of the need to preserve its ethnic, sectarian and confessional character. That identity is the unifying element for all the Iraqi people. It constitutes a safety valve to prevent the Iraqi people from falling into the abyss of separatism and division — sectarian trends that some forces in the region are trying to foment.

Egypt would like to stress the importance of ending the flagrant incursions by Turkish forces into Iraq. I note Iraq's failure to date to heed regional and international calls to withdraw Turkish forces from Iraq. In that regard, Egypt calls on the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq to follow-up once again on the withdrawal of the Turkish forces from Iraqi territory. We would also like to stress the importance of Iran's refraining from interfering in the internal affairs of Iraq by encouraging trends that would threaten the unity of the Iraqi society.

We welcome the victories achieved by the Iraqi army in the past few months by liberating many areas and removing them from the authority of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham. We stress the importance of

developing a comprehensive vision to achieve stability, an approach that is not limited to the security and military aspects but also includes national reconciliation, the integration of Sunnis and reconstruction.

We emphasize the importance of concerted efforts by the international community to assist Iraq in demining activities, including when it comes to explosive remnants preventing the return of displaced persons to Ramadi and other liberated areas. The Egyptian Ministry of Defence has already approved a training programme for Iraqi forces in that regard.

Egypt has also provided the Government of Kurdistan, Iraq, with humanitarian assistance for displaced persons. Egypt underscores the importance of the humanitarian aspect of the Iraqi situation, which includes finding missing Iraqi prisoners of war and returning Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, which have been the subject of many United Nations resolutions. Those issues have also been the subject of the requisite importance in numerous statements of the Security Council. Egypt believes that it is important that the Council continue to shed light on those matters, in view of their humanitarian and legal ramifications.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.